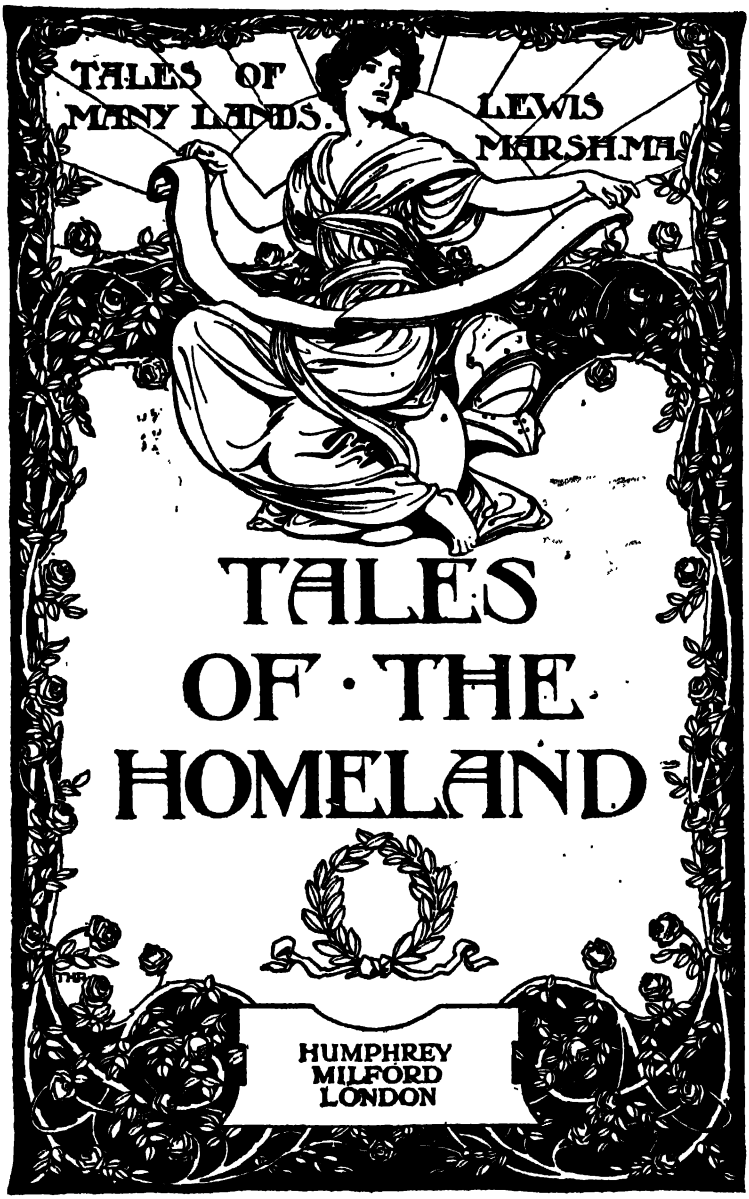
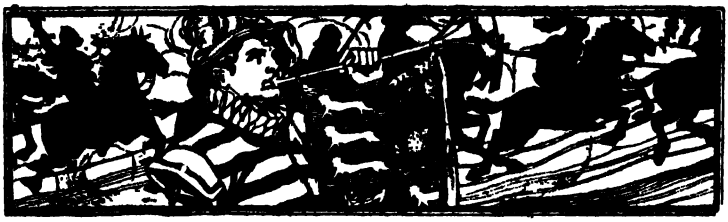


TALES OF THE HOMELAND

HUMPHREY MILFORD
LONDON



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PREFACE

IN this series of Readers an attempt has been made to arouse a real and permanent taste for literature in the classroom, by following the natural development of literature in the world. Thus, in the first two books of the series, the primitive literature of young nations was represented by a number of tales, gathered from the folk-lore and mythology of various peoples of the ancient and of the modern world.

By a gradual and almost imperceptible transition, the folk-tale and the myth develop, with the progress of civilization, into the heroic legend and chivalric romance. A similar transition is effected in the third and fourth books of this series, in which a collection of tales is provided, representative of the world's *Heldengesang*, and introducing the traditionary heroes of many lands and nations. These tales, "half legend, half historic," are the classics of their age, and are no less worthy of admiration than the more finished products of a later period.

Book III deals with the heroes of the Homeland and the Empire, Book IV with those of foreign lands. By their very nature, the stories reflect to some extent the history and geography of the nations whose property they are—an aspect which is not to be regarded as valueless from an educational point of view. To develop this feature, the tales of Book III have been arranged geographically, starting with the Homeland and passing outwards to distant parts of the Empire. In the fourth book, the plan is historical, beginning with the ancient empires of the world, and following the course of civilization westwards to the modern nations of Europe.

Such a method seems to be the natural outcome of the form of tale chosen for the books. It is hoped that it will serve the purpose of arousing interest in literature as part of the life, part of the history of a nation; and that the correlation of literature with other subjects of the curriculum will tend to widen the range of the pupil's thought, and to open out for him fresh avenues of knowledge.

As these books are intended primarily for reading purposes, no extraneous matter has been introduced, with the exception of a few necessary footnotes. Yet it should be remembered that literature, grammar and composition are indissolubly connected with one another, and the teacher should regard each of the books as the basis of instruction in English.

For both oral and written work in this connection, no forms of literature are so well adapted as folk-lore, mythology and romance, if only for the powerful appeal which they make to the imagination. The pupil should be encouraged to reproduce the stories he has read, to construct others of a similar character, and to dramatize the tales which lend themselves to such a treatment. The more varied the ways in which the stories are used, the greater will be the command of language and facility of expression gained by the pupil.

The illustrations, again, should not be regarded as merely ornamental. They provide visual assistance to the pupil in the free expression of his thoughts, and therefore most of them can be made to serve as useful exercises in composition.

L. M.



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BEVIS THE STRONG

I—*Bevis loses his Father and is sold into Slavery*

In the old, old days, there was born in the town of Southampton a boy named Bevis, who showed such signs of strength even as a baby, that all men called him Bevis the Strong. His father was a good and valiant earl, lord of the town of Southampton, and his mother was the beautiful daughter of the King of Scotland.

Now the Countess was as wicked as she

was beautiful, and she had no love for her husband or for her little son. So wicked was she, indeed, that she induced a young knight, named Sir Murdour, to slay the Earl while he was hunting in the forest.

"Bring me his head," said she; "then you shall be my husband, and rule over this city in the place of the Earl."

Sir Murdour, who was as evil as she was herself, did not delay. He gathered together a band of men, and slew the Earl when he was alone in the forest chasing a wild boar.

Bevis was at this time only seven years old, but he was so tall and so strong, that his mother felt that her life would never be safe as long as he lived, so she ordered his uncle Sir Saber to take the boy away and put him to death.

Saber at first refused. "This is a foul deed you would have me do," said he, "and one for which I have little liking."

"If you do not obey me in this," replied the Countess, "I shall know that you do not mean to remain faithful to me, and you shall be put to death at once."

Then Saber pretended to give way. He took

his nephew to a distant farm which belonged to him, and, killing a pig, sprinkled the garments of Bevis with its blood. These he sent to the Countess as a sign that he had done her bidding.

"As for you, dear nephew," he said to Bevis, "I would not harm a hair of your fair head. We must wait and watch until the time comes, when we can win back for you the lands which are yours. Meanwhile you must remain here disguised as a peasant, and spend your time in looking after my flocks."

Bevis made no objection. He took a stout staff and quietly followed his sheep over the downs. One day, however, they wandered far, and by evening the boy found himself on a hillside, looking down upon the castle which was so lately his home.

At the sight, he was overcome by anger, and, forsaking his sheep, he rushed down the hill, swinging his staff as he ran. The porter at the castle gate attempted to stop him, but all he had for his pains was a cracked head.

Bevis ran straight on into the great hall, where he found Sir Murdour and his mother feasting and making merry in the midst of their knights and men-at-arms.

"False traitors and murderers!" he cried. "Is it thus that you mourn for my dead father?" Before any one could stop him, he ran to Sir Murdour, and struck him such a blow with his staff upon the head, that he laid him senseless upon the floor

Instantly the hall was in confusion. "Seize the fierce child!" cried the Countess. "Bind him hand and foot!"

Four knights threw themselves upon Bevis, and in spite of his struggles bound him so fast that he could not move.

"Away with him to the port!" said his cruel mother, "and sell him as a slave to the first captain who sails for heathen lands."

Her orders were instantly carried out, and before nightfall Bevis found himself upon a ship sailing for the land of the Saracens.

Fortunately for him, the captain was a kind man, who took a great liking to the sturdy boy. He treated him well, and when they at length arrived at the land for which they were bound, he took him up to the court of the Saracen king, whose name was Ermyn.

The king asked Bevis many questions about his country and his parents, and was much delighted with his answers.



"The king asked Bevis many questions about his country."

"You are a brave boy," he said. "I am sure that a child who can do such deeds as you have done with a staff, will prove a marvel when he is old enough to wield a sword. Stay with me; give up your Christian religion, and you shall follow me upon this throne, and wed my beautiful daughter Felice."

"Not for all the wealth of the world," cried Bevis boldly, "would I give up my faith and my religion. Kill me if you will and if you can, but I will never bend the knee to your heathen gods."

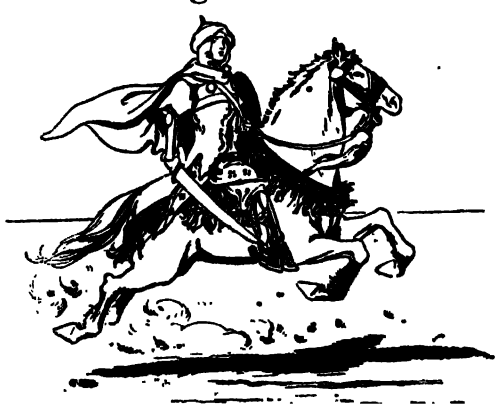
Curiously enough, Ermyn was not displeased at this speech, for he admired the bold spirit with which it was spoken. He took the boy's words in good part and said: "You need not fear death at my hands. While you are a boy you shall be my page, and when you are old enough to be knighted, you shall bear my banner behind me in battle."

With this Bevis was well content, and he remained at the court of the king, learning the use of the lance, the sword and the bow, in which the infidels excelled. By the time he had reached the age of sixteen, there was no man in the land who could beat him at

any sport, and there was none so tall, so strong and so handsome as he.

It would take too long to relate all the brave deeds performed by Bevis during these nine years. It was he who slew a fierce wild boar, which had long been the terror of the land. It was he who killed a mighty giant; and it was he who drove back and cut to pieces the invading army of the king of Damascus.

As a reward for his success in this battle, the grateful king made him a knight, and loaded him with costly presents. He was given a splendid white war-horse, named Arundel, whose saddle and bridle glittered with jewels, also a suit of armour inlaid with gold, and a wonderful sword of which the hilt was a single diamond.



II—*Bevis casts down an Idol and overcomes two Dragons*

Now all these years, Felice, the king's daughter, had been growing more and more fond of the handsome youth. At last she went to him and asked him to take her as his wife.

"Alas! this may not be," replied Sir Bevis. "How can a Christian knight take to wife a heathen maid?"

Felice begged and prayed, but all to no purpose. In the end she said, "If you will be my husband, I will forsake my false gods and become a Christian."

"If you will do that, I will gladly wed you," answered the knight, "but I fear that your father will never consent to such an agreement."

Nor was he mistaken, for when the king heard that his daughter intended to become a Christian in order to marry Bevis, his love for the young man turned to anger. He drove him out of the country with bitter words, and imprisoned his daughter in a lonely tower guarded by two fierce lions.

Driven from the land which had been his

home for so long, Bevis travelled for many days, suffering much from hunger and thirst. At last he reached a town so magnificent that he knew a great king must live there. Passing through the streets, he found himself in the middle of a large crowd of people, who were preparing to offer up a sacrifice to a wooden idol.

The sight of such a heathen sacrifice roused the young man to wrath, and, passing through the multitude, he seized the idol by its golden crown and hurled it into the dust, crying to the people: "Now go and help a god who cannot help himself!"

A thousand hands were at once stretched forth to seize the insolent stranger. Sir Bevis fought like a lion, and many of his enemies fell before his terrible sword; but he was at length overcome by their numbers, and, bound hand and foot, was dragged before the king.

The latter was filled with anger, when he heard of the insult Sir Bevis had offered to the idol.

"Take him away to the deepest dungeon beneath my palace!" he cried. "Two hungry dragons are kept in that dark cell,

and they will soon make an end of this impudent fellow."

Bevis was now in a sad case. His arms were unbound, ropes were fastened around them, and he was lowered down, down, down into the depths of the most terrible dungeon that can be imagined. At the bottom it was as dark as night, and the youth could see nothing but two pairs of fiery eyes glaring at him.

As he grew more accustomed to the inky darkness, he could dimly perceive the forms of the two huge dragons which lay watching him. They did not attack him yet, for no doubt they thought he could not escape, and counted upon making a meal of him at their leisure.

Never did they make a greater mistake, for their delay allowed the brave knight to search round for a weapon, and he was fortunate enough to find a heavy club which had been thrown down in a corner.

This was a poor enough weapon with which to give battle to two such fierce monsters. But Bevis was not dismayed. Whirling his club around his head with all his strength, he attacked the dragons, and then began the fiercest battle of his life.



pened, climbed down the rope to find out. No sooner had he reached the bottom than Bevis slew him with the sword he had taken from his comrade. Then he seized the rope by which the gaolers had descended, and easily gained the surface of the pit in which he had been so long imprisoned.

Yet he did not stir from the place until night had fallen, for his eyes were not used to the strong light of day. No sooner had the sun set than he issued forth and

made his way to the king's stable. There he found hundreds of splendid war-horses, and suits of armour without number.

He chose the fastest steed, and the finest coat of mail that he could find; and, arming himself with spear, sword and dagger, he rode out once more into the open air.

III—*Bevis delivers a Princess and regains his Inheritance*

On and on he rode for many days, and every day had its adventure; but we must pass on until the time when he reached again the country of King Ermyn, and found out that the princess Felice had been imprisoned in a tower guarded by lions.

Without delay, Bevis hastened to the tower, which was built on the summit of a high mountain. Here he soon saw the two lions, which were the largest and fiercest in the world.

As soon as they perceived Bevis, they sprang upon him, roaring with rage. But they had little counted upon the strength of the knight. He felt no fear at their terrible appearance, but drew his sword, and with one stroke he cut off both their heads.

The princess, who had been watching the fight from the top of the tower, now came running down, and cast herself into the knight's arms.

"You must never leave me again, Bevis," she cried. "Remember that you promised to make me your wife when I forsook my false gods. Now take me up with you on your horse, and let us seek a new home across the sea."

Sir Bevis answered: "Yes, fair princess, you shall come with me and be my wife. We must ride to the coast and take ship for my own land, for if your father finds out the truth, he will surely make an end of both of us."

So Bevis took the princess up before him, and they galloped all the way to the sea. Here they were fortunate enough to find a merchant vessel ready to sail for Germany. They took passage on this ship, and, after a safe and prosperous voyage, arrived at last at the city of Cologne.

Now the Bishop of Cologne happened to be the uncle of Bevis, brother to his murdered father and to Sir Saber who had saved his life. So Bevis made his way with his princess to

the Bishop's palace, where he was received with every mark of affection.

"Fair nephew," said the Bishop, when he had heard the knight's story, "you must not remain here or take any rest until you have avenged the death of your father, and seized the lands which belong to you as his heir. I will give you a hundred well-armed knights, and with their aid you shall overcome the false traitor Sir Murdour, and take possession of your city of Southampton."

Sir Bevis was overjoyed at this offer of his uncle, which he gladly accepted. Leaving the fair Felice in the Bishop's care, he sailed for Southampton with his hundred knights, all of them men of proved valour.

In due time, the vessel arrived at a port a few miles from Southampton, where Bevis went ashore disguised as a sailor, in order to find out how it fared with the usurper, Sir Murdour.

It was not long before he met a citizen of Southampton, and he asked him for tidings, saying that he had just returned from a very long voyage.

"Ah! friend," said the man, "you are fortunate to have been away from this un-

happy land. Ever since the death of our beloved Earl, the people have been sorely oppressed by the wicked knight Sir Murdour. Many have fled to the Isle of Wight, where, led by the good Sir Saber, they have been able to drive back all the attacks of the usurper."

"Brave men!" cried Bevis heartily, "this is good news indeed!"

"There is worse to follow, I fear," replied the citizen. "For some months, Sir Murdour has been gathering together a large army, and this very day he is leading his host across to the island. Against such a force, Sir Saber and his gallant men cannot hope to hold forth a single day."

On hearing this, Sir Bevis turned and ran for his ship, for he saw that no time was to be lost.

"Set all sail!" he cried as he ran on board. "There are deeds to be done this day."

The men hastened to do as he commanded, and before long the vessel had crossed the narrow strait which separates the Isle of Wight from the mainland. Already the shouts of the captains and the clang of sword on sword showed that the battle had begun on shore.

Sir Bevis quickly landed with all his knights, and the little troop ran to the scene of the combat. There they found Saber and his men on the point of giving way before the enemy, but the unexpected addition to their forces gave them new heart.

Sir Bevis pressed into the fight, ever searching for his old enemy Sir Murdour. At length he perceived him, mounted upon a great white steed, and urging on his men with words and blows.

When he saw the young knight, he turned white with fear and strove to escape him; but it was all in vain; wherever Murdour rode, there was Bevis close behind. At last Bevis was near enough to strike at his enemy, and with one blow of the sword he smote him lifeless to the ground.

Now that their leader was dead, the invading army surrendered, and Sir Bevis crossed in triumph to Southampton. Before his arrival, the wicked Countess, who had already heard the news of her husband's death, threw herself from the top of a lofty tower and was killed on the spot.

There was now no one to oppose Sir Bevis, and at his approach the citizens rushed out



"With one blow of the sword he smote him lifeless to the ground."

in crowds to hail their rightful lord. He sent at once to Cologne for his beloved princess Felice, and was forthwith wedded to her by his uncle the Bishop.

Thus Sir Bevis at last came to his own again after many trials and troubles; and with him his wife, the fair Felice, who, for her good works, became known as the Lady Bountiful. Long and happily they lived in their good town of Southampton, which every year grew more prosperous under their kindly rule.

From the *Early English Metrical Romances.*





KING JOHN AND THE ABBOT OF CANTERBURY

I

An ancient story I'll tell you anon
Of a notable prince, that was called King John;
And he ruled England with main and with might,
For he did great wrong, and maintained little right.

And I'll tell you a story, a story so merry,
Concerning the Abbot of Canterbury;
How for his house-keeping and high renown,
They rode post for him to fair London town.

A hundred men, the King did hear say,
The Abbot kept in his house every day;
And fifty gold chains, without any doubt,
In velvet coats waited the Abbot about.

"How now, Father Abbot! I hear it of thee,
Thou keepest a far better house than me;
And for thy house-keeping and high renown,
I fear thou work'st treason against my crown."

"My liege," quoth the Abbot, "I would it were known,
That I spend nothing, but what is my own;
And I trust your Grace will do me no deere,[1]
For spending my own true-gotten gear."

"Yes, yes, Father Abbot! Thy fault it is high,
And now for the same thou needs must die;
For except thou canst answer me questions three,
Thy head shall be smitten from thy bodie.

"And first," quoth the King, "when I'm in this stead,
With my crown of gold so fair on my head,
Among all my liege-men so noble of birth,
Thou must tell to one penny what I am worth.

"Secondly, tell me, without any doubt,
How soon I may ride the whole world about.
And at the third question thou must not shrink,
But tell me here truly what I do think."

"O, these are hard questions for my shallow wit,
And I cannot answer your Grace as yet;
But if you will give me but three weeks' space,
I'll do my endeavour to answer your Grace."

"Now three weeks' space to thee will I give,
And that is the longest time thou hast to live;
For if thou dost not answer my questions three
Thy lands and thy livings are forfeit to me."

[1] "Deere" = harm.



II

Away rode the Abbot, all sad at that word,
And he rode to Cambridge and Oxenford;
But never a doctor there was so wise,
That could with his learning an answer devise.

Then home rode the Abbot of comfort so cold,
And he met his shepherd off to the fold.
"How now, my lord Abbot! You are welcome home;
What news do you bring us from good King John?"

"Sad news, sad news, shepherd, I must give,
That I have but three more days to live;
For if I do not answer him questions three,
My head will be smitten from my bodie.

"The first is to tell him, there in that stead,[1]
With his crown of gold so fair on his head,
Among all his liege-men, so noble of birth,
To within a penny of what he is worth.

"The second to tell him without any doubt,
How soon he may ride this whole world about;
And at the third question I must not shrink,
But tell him there truly what he does think."

"Now, cheer up, Sir Abbot! Did you never hear yet
That a fool may teach a wise man wit?
Lend me a horse and all your apparel,
And I'll ride to London to answer your quarrel.

"Nay, frown not, if it hath been told unto me
I am like your Lordship as ever may be;
For if you will but lend me your gown
There is none shall know us in fair London town."

"Now, horses and serving-men thou shalt have,
With sumptuous array most gallant and brave;
With crozier and mitre, and rochet[2] and cope,[3]
Fit to appear 'fore our Father the Pope."

[1] Place.
[2] Vestment of fine linen worn by an abbot.
[3] Richly embroidered garment worn over the surplice.

III

"Now welcome, Sir Abbot!" the King he did say;
"'Tis well thou'rt come back to keep thy day;
For if thou canst answer my questions three,
Thy life and thy living both saved shall be.

"And first, when thou see'st me here in this stead,
With my crown of gold so fair on my head,
Among all my liege-men, so noble of birth,
Tell me, to one penny, what I am worth."

"For thirty pence our Saviour was sold.
Among the false Jews, as I have been told;
And twenty-nine is the worth of thee,
For I think thou art one penny worse than He!"

The King he laughed, and swore by St. Bittle:
"I did not think I had been worth so little.
Now, secondly, tell me, without any doubt,
How soon I may ride this whole world about."

"You must rise with the sun, and ride with the same,
Until the next morning he riseth again;
And then your Grace need not make any doubt,
But in twenty-four hours you'll ride it about."

The King he laughed, and swore by St. John:
"I did not think it could be done so soon!
Now, from the third question thou must not shrink,
But tell me here truly what I do think."

"Yea, that shall I do, and make your Grace merry—
You think I'm the Abbot of Canterbury;
But I'm his poor shepherd as plain you may see,
That am come to beg pardon for him and for me."

The King he laughed, and swore by the mass:
"I'll make thee Lord Abbot this day in his place!"
"Now nay, my liege, be not in such speed,
For, alack, I can neither write nor read!"

"Four nobles a week then I will give thee,
For this merry jest thou hast shown unto me;
And tell the old Abbot when thou comest home,
Thou hast brought him a pardon from good King John."

From *Percy's Reliques of Ancient Poetry.*





THE FIRST MEN IN BRITAIN

ONCE upon a time—so long ago that no man can tell when—the land was so much higher that between England and Ireland there was firm, dry land.

There were forests of Scotch fir, just as there are now. There were wild horses, wild deer, and wild oxen—those last of enormous size. There were beavers too; and honest little water-rats, who, I dare say, sat up on their hind legs like monkeys, nibbling the water-lily pods, thousands of years ago, as they do in our ponds now.

Mixed with all these animals, there wandered about great herds of elephants and rhinoceroses—not smooth-skinned, but

covered with hair and wool. And with them, stranger still, were great hippopotamuses, who came, perhaps, northward in summer-time along the seashore and down the rivers, having passed up to France and then to England.

With them came other strange animals, especially the great Irish Elk, as he is called, as large as the largest horse, with horns sometimes ten feet across. You can judge what a noble animal he must have been.

Enormous bears came, too, and hyenas, and a tiger or lion (I cannot say which), as large as the largest Bengal tiger now to be seen in India.

And in those days, we cannot exactly say when, there came creatures without any hair to keep them warm, or scales to defend them; without horns or tusks to fight with, or teeth to worry and bite; the weakest, you would have thought, of them all. And yet they were stronger than all the animals, because they were men, with reasonable souls.

Whence they came we cannot tell, nor why; perhaps from mere hunting after food, and love of wandering and being independent and alone. Perhaps they came into this land

for fear of stronger and cleverer people than themselves.

Be that as it may, they came; and so cunning were these strange men, and so brave likewise, though they had no iron among them—only flint and sharpened bones—that they contrived to kill and eat the mammoths and the giant oxen and the wild horses and the reindeer, and to hold their own against hyenas and tigers and bears, simply because they had wits, and the dumb animals had none.

You may find the flint weapons, which these old savages used, buried in many a gravel pit up and down France and the south of England.

In many a cave lie the bones of animals which the savages ate, and cracked to get the marrow out of them. These bones are mixed up with their flint weapons and bone harpoons, and sometimes with burnt ashes and with round stones (used perhaps to heat water).

In these caves, no doubt, the savages lived, for not only have weapons been found in them, but actual drawings scratched with flint on bone or ivory—drawings of elk and bull and horse. There was one drawing, found in France, of the great mammoth himself, the

woolly elephant, with a mane on his shoulders like a lion's mane.

Sometimes, again, especially in Denmark, these savages have left behind them, upon the shore, mounds of dirt, which are called "kitchen-middens." They are made up of the shells of oysters, cockles, mussels and periwinkles, on which these poor creatures fed. Mingled with them are broken bones of beasts and fishes and birds, and flint knives, and axes and sling stones. Here and there are hearths, on which they have cooked their meals in some rough way.

When stronger and bolder people, like the Irish, and the Highlanders of Scotland, and the Gauls of France, came northward with their bronze and iron weapons, these poor little savages with their flint arrows and axes were no match for them, and had to run away northward, or to be all killed out; for people were fierce and cruel in those old times, and looked on every one of a different race from themselves as a natural enemy.

So these poor savages were driven out, till none were left, save the little Lapps up in the north of Norway, where they live to this day.

But stories of them lingered on, and were

told round the fire on winter nights—how they dwelt in caves, and had strange customs, and used poisoned weapons. Thus a hundred legends sprung up about them, which used once to be believed by grown-up folk.

Because some of the savages were very short, as the Lapps and Eskimos are now, the story grew up of their being so small that they could make themselves invisible; and because others of them were very tall and terrible, the story grew that there were giants in that old world.

Of course, the legends and tales about them became exaggerated as they passed from mouth to mouth over the Christmas fire, in the days when no one could read or write. But that the tale began by being true, any one may well believe who knows how many cannibal savages there are in the world even now.

Such savages may have lingered (I believe, from the old ballads and romances, that they did linger) for a long time in lonely forests and mountain caves, till they were all killed out by warriors who wore mail-armour, and carried steel sword, and battle-axe, and lance.

CHARLES KINGSLEY.



THE ADVENTURES OF SIR BEAUMAINS

I—*How Beaumains took upon himself an Adventure*

KING Arthur of Britain had gone with all his Knights of the Round Table to a castle called Kin Kenadon, in Wales, there to keep the feast of Pentecost. Now it was a custom of the king, that at the feast of Pentecost he would eat no meat until he had heard of some adventure.

So about noon, Sir Gawaine, the king's nephew, sat at a window of the castle looking for some strange thing to happen. Before long he spied three men riding up on horseback, while a dwarf was running on foot behind.

Then Sir Gawaine said to the king: "Sir, go in to your meal, for here towards you comes a strange adventure."

So King Arthur went in to dinner with all his knights. Scarcely were they seated, when the three men whom Sir Gawaine had seen walked into the hall. Two of them were tall and handsome, but the third was far taller and far more handsome than either of them. He leant heavily upon their shoulders as though he could not support himself.

"God bless you, King Arthur," said this stranger raising himself erect, while his companions departed in silence. "I have come here to ask you to grant me three gifts. The first I beg for now; for the other two I will ask on the day of Pentecost a year hence."

Now King Arthur liked this young man well, though he had never seen him before, so he said: "Ask, my fair son, and you shall have what you wish."

"Sir," replied the stranger, "this is my first request: that you will give me meat and drink for twelve months."

"That is a poor gift," said Arthur; "have you nothing better to ask? Yet you shall

have it with all my heart, for you are of noble blood, or I am greatly mistaken." Then the king took him to Sir Kay, his steward, and commanded that he should be fed and treated as if he were a lord's son.

But Sir Kay did not like the stranger, nor did he like the favour with which King Arthur had looked upon him, for he had a jealous nature.

"This is no man of noble blood," said he mockingly, "or he would have asked for a horse and armour, in order that he might do noble deeds. He is a low fellow, and I shall put him in the kitchen, where he shall eat broth every day until he is as fat as a hog. Since he has no name, I will give him one. He shall be called Beaumains, that is, Fair-hands, for his hands are large and fair."

So the young man was put into the kitchen, where he sat amongst the cooks and serving boys and shared their food. This treatment he bore meekly for twelve months, never complaining, and pleasing every man by his kindness and courage.

At the end of twelve months, King Arthur again kept the feast of Pentecost, and as before he would not sit down to meat until

he heard of some adventure. As he sat waiting in his hall, there came to him a beautiful damsel, who saluted him and begged for his help.

"For whom do you require it?" said Arthur, "and why is it needed?"

"Sir," said the maid, "I have a lady of great renown, and she is besieged in her castle by a wicked knight called the Red Knight of the Red Lands; unless she is rescued she is sure to die a cruel death."

"What is the name of your lady?" asked the king.

"Ah! I am not allowed to tell that," replied the damsel; "but she is a great lady, and one who possesses wide lands."

"Then if I may not know her name," said Arthur, "I will send none of my knights to help her, although there is many a knight here present who would gladly ride to her rescue."

At these words the damsel looked very sad, and was about to depart, when Beaumains walked out of the kitchen and said to the king: "Sir, the time has now come for me to ask you for those two gifts which you promised me. The first is that you will permit me to go with this damsel and take

upon me her adventure; the second that Sir Lancelot, your bravest warrior, may ride after me to make me knight when I have done deeds to deserve the honour."

"You shall have these gifts," said the king. "It shall all be done as you desire."

The damsel, however, was by no means satisfied. She cried out against the king for giving her a kitchen boy as knight, and, mounting her horse, rode away in anger. But Beaumains took no heed. A horse and rich armour were brought to him, and he was clad in cloth of gold. All the court gazed at him in wonder as he rode after the damsel, for few men ever looked so noble as he.

No sooner had he departed, than Sir Kay, who grew angry at seeing Beaumains so much admired, said: "I will ride after this knave, and he shall see who is his master."

"Nay," said Sir Lancelot, "leave the youth in peace; he has already suffered much shame at your hands, and it would be an ill deed to strike down one who has so little practice in the arts of war."

Sir Kay took no notice of these words, but mounted his horse and rode after Beaumains. When he came up with him, he put his spear



"Sir Kay fell to the ground sorely wounded."—*See* p. 49.

in rest and rode straight at the young man. Much to his surprise, however, the latter turned the blow aside, and dealt him such a stroke with his sword that Sir Kay fell to the ground sorely wounded.

Now Sir Lancelot had followed close behind, in order to see that Sir Kay did the young man no harm. Great was his surprise to see the knight stretched upon the ground, and greater still it was when Beaumains offered to do battle with him as well.

They made ready at once, and fought for a long time both with spear and sword, until at length Sir Lancelot became amazed at the strength of his opponent. Indeed, he fought more like a giant than a man, and he never seemed to tire. Although Sir Lancelot was the bravest knight in Arthur's kingdom, he began to fear that he, too, would be overcome by the kitchen boy; so he said: "Stay your hand, Beaumains. Our quarrel is not so great that we may not stop this battle."

"There is no quarrel between us at all," replied Beaumains. "Indeed, you have done me honour in crossing swords with me. Do you think that one day I may be worthy of knighthood?"

"You shall be knighted this day," said Sir Lancelot heartily; "for there is certainly no champion in the kingdom who could stand against your strength." So saying, he laid his sword on Beaumains' head and made him a knight.

Then Sir Beaumains rode after the damsel, leaving Sir Lancelot to look after the wounded Sir Kay. A brave sight he was as he rode through the woodland. The sunbeams flashed from his polished helmet and his breastplate of steel, while the red plumes tossed proudly above his head.

Yet the damsel looked scornfully at him and cried: "Keep your distance, knave. What are you but a ladle-washer from King Arthur's kitchen? You are of no use to me, for you will not even dare to look in the face of the fierce knight, who is besieging the castle of my mistress."

"I will try to do so," said Sir Beaumains humbly. "Say to me what you will, damsel, I will not leave you, for I have promised King Arthur to rescue your lady, and I shall do so or meet my death in the attempt."

So they rode on through the wood, the damsel ever in front, on her white palfrey,

and Sir Beaumains behind on his great war-horse.

II—*How Sir Beaumains fought several Knights*

Thus they rode for many days, until at length they came to a black land, and in the black land there grew a black hawthorn tree, on which hung a black banner and a black shield. By the shield stood a long black spear, and close at hand stood a great black horse covered with silk.

Near the horse sat a knight clad in black armour, and his name was the Knight of the Black Land. When the damsel saw him she said to Beaumains: "Now fly for your life, kitchen boy, for this knight will certainly slay you if he sets eyes upon you."

"You would always have me a coward," replied Beaumains, "but it is not my custom to turn my back upon a foe."

Just then the Black Knight saw them, and called out to the damsel: "Is this a knight of King Arthur that you have brought with you to be your champion?"

"Nay," replied the maid, "this is but a kitchen boy who will not leave me, although

I have tried hard to rid myself of him. Slay him if you can, for then I shall have done with him."

"He looks a good, strong man," replied the knight: "it would be a shame to harm him. He shall leave his horse and armour with me, and I will do him no evil."

When Sir Beaumains heard him speak thus, he said; "Sir Knight, you talk very boldly of my horse and armour. Come and win them if you can, for you shall have nothing of mine as long as I am alive."

With that the Black Knight mounted his black steed, and he and Beaumains rushed at one another with a noise like thunder. The Black Knight's spear broke into splinters against the shield of Beaumains; while the latter thrust his spear into the side of the knight, and wounded him sorely.

Yet the Black Knight drew his sword, and dealt Sir Beaumains many sore blows, until at length he fell to the ground dead from his wound. When Sir Beaumains saw how well armed and mounted he was, he took his horse and clad himself in his armour and rode after the damsel.

"Alas!" said she, "that such a knave as

you should have slain so good a knight; but you will profit little by it, for you have yet to meet his two brothers, who will certainly overcome you. Flee while you may, and save your life!"

"It may happen to me to be beaten or slain," replied Sir Beaumains, "but I will not flee away nor leave your side for all you say."

So they rode on in silence, and the damsel was a little sad, for she was beginning to admire the great, strong man who always rode behind her, and took so little heed of her bitter words.

Thus, as they rode together, they came upon a knight dressed in green armour, and mounted upon a horse with green trappings. He reined up his horse in the way before them, and he cried to the damsel: "Is that my brother, the Black Knight, that you have with you?"

"Nay," cried she, "this is an unhappy kitchen boy who has slain your brother by trickery, and has taken his horse and armour."

"Alas!" said the Green Knight, "it is a great pity that so noble a knight should be



slain so shamefully." Turning to Beaumains, he cried: "Traitor! for slaying my brother you shall die at once."

"I defy you!" said Sir Beaumains. "But I should like you to know that I fought your brother in knightly fashion, and slew him by no shameful means."

Thereupon the Green Knight took up a green horn which hung upon a thorn-bush and blew three notes on it. At once two damsels appeared, one of whom brought a green spear and the other a green shield, which they gave to the knight.

Then began a fierce battle. The spears of the warriors were soon shivered to splinters, and they were forced to come down from their horses and fight with swords. Steel rang against steel, until both men were sorely wounded; but neither would give way.

Then the damsel cried: "My lord the Green Knight, why do you stand so long fighting with the kitchen knave? It is a shame that you were ever made a knight, when such a boy as this proves a match for you."

At this the Green Knight was ashamed, and gave so great a stroke with his sword that he cleft Beaumains' shield in two. But this advantage was of little use to him, for Sir Beaumains, in his anger, dealt his foe such a blow upon the helmet, that he brought him almost senseless to the ground.

"Mercy!" cried the Green Knight. "I pray you, do not slay me."

"I will show you no mercy," said Beaumains, "and you shall die at once unless this damsel begs for your life."

"I will never do that, false kitchen knave," said the maiden bitterly, "for I will never accept any favour at your hands." She spoke

angrily, for her pride was being humbled by one whom she pretended to despise.

"If you will not ask for his life," said Beaumains, "then he must surely die."

"Alas!" cried the Green Knight, "must I die when one word would save me? Have mercy upon me, and my life shall be at your service, and the lives of the thirty knights that follow me."

"Sir Knight," replied Beaumains, "all this is of no avail, for if the damsel does not ask for your life, you shall die." And as he spoke he raised his sword in the air.

Then the proud maiden saw that if she was to save the knight's life she must yield. "Stay!" she cried, almost weeping with rage, "do not slay him, for if you do, you will repent it."

"Damsel," said Beaumains, "at your command, his life is given him." He bade the Green Knight arise, and the latter swore that he and his thirty knights would always be at Beaumains' service if he needed them.

They passed that night at the castle of the Green Knight, and on the morrow they went upon their way. But as they rode, the damsel began to speak again with scorn, for



"'SLAY,'" SHE CRIED, "DO NOT SLAY HIM"

she could not forgive Beaumains, although in her heart she admired him more and more for his strength and his bravery

"Why do you follow me, you kitchen boy?" she said. "Do not think that I esteem you the more because you have overcome two brave knights. If you do not leave me, you will have to do battle with one that is greater than either of these; you will surely fall beneath his sword."

"Fair lady," replied Beaumains, "can you not speak to me more kindly? You always say that my enemies will kill me or beat me. Yet it happens that I escape, and they lie in the dust. Therefore it is useless for you to rebuke me, for I will not leave you until this adventure is at an end."

III—*How Sir Beaumains rescued a Lady*

They now rode on for some days, until they came to a great castle as white as snow, with strong battlements, and a double moat around it; and over the gate there hung fifty shields of various colours, and before the gates stretched a fair meadow.

The lord of the castle saw them coming,

and rode forth to meet them. And as he rode, they saw that his armour was blue in colour; blue were his spear and shield and the trappings of his horse. When he drew near, he thought that Beaumains was his brother the Black Knight, so he cried: "Greeting, brother; what are you doing in this part of the country?"

"This is not your brother," said the damsel; "this is but a kitchen knave from King Arthur's court. He has killed your brother the Black Knight, and has also overcome your brother the Green Knight. Now take your vengeance upon him, so that I may be rid of him for ever."

With this, the two knights rode hard at one another, but the Blue Knight fared no better than his two brothers, and at the end of the fight, his life was spared only at the request of the damsel. Then the Blue Knight promised to serve Beaumains when he needed, together with sixty knights who followed him.

After passing the night in the white castle, Sir Beaumains and the damsel rode forth again, and ever as before the maiden spoke bitter words to him. He listened patiently

for a long time, but at length he said: "Damsel, you are cruel to rebuke me as you do, for I have already done you good service, and even now I am riding to the rescue of your mistress. Rebuke me no more until you see me beaten in battle: then you may cry shame upon me and drive me from your side."

When the maiden heard these words, her pride left her, and she repented of all the evil things she had said. These many days she had travelled with the knight, and though she spoke harsh words to him, she knew that he was brave, and true, and noble; for in spite of her unkindness, he had shown himself always patient and gentle towards her.

So she said sadly: "Beaumains, you have conquered me in the end. Never has a knight been treated so shamefully as you have been by me, and yet you have ever been kindly and courteous to me. You are the bravest of knights, for I have seen your deeds with my own eyes; and now I know that you must be noble, for only a man of noble birth could have suffered in silence at my hands as you have done. Will you not tell me who you are?"

"I will tell you," replied Beaumains; "but you must promise to keep my name and rank a secret."

"I will tell no one," replied the lady.

"Then you must know," said Beaumains, "that my name is Gareth of Orkney. My father is King Lot, and my mother is sister to King Arthur himself, yet King Arthur knows not who I am."

"I thank you for telling me," said the damsel. "Now pray forgive me all that I have said or done against you, for I know you now as the bravest knight that ever lived."

"I forgive you with all my heart," said Beaumains, "for your words give me new courage, and make me feel there is no knight living whom I cannot overcome. Now lead on and I will follow."

"Nay, I lead no longer," she answered. "Come, ride here by my side."

So they rode on happily enough, and, passing through a thick forest, they came to a place where they saw many pavilions and tents, all set around a great castle.

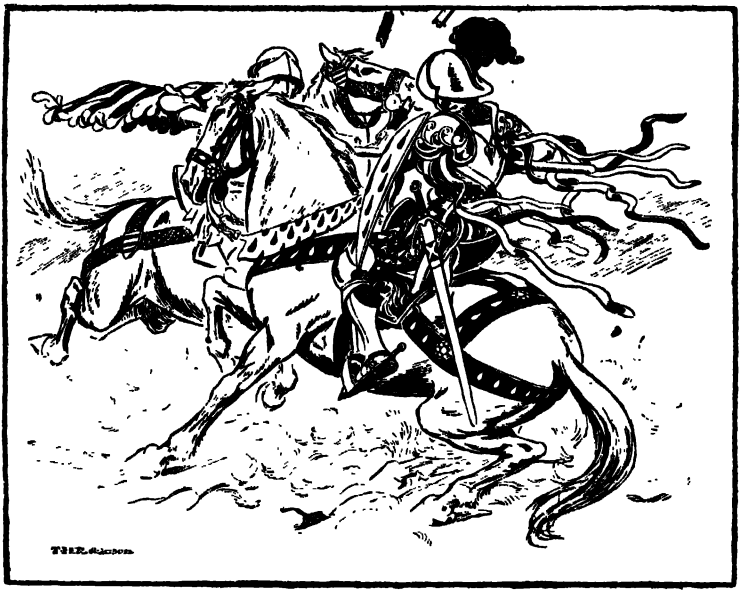
"This is the castle of my mistress, Dame Lyonesse," said the damsel; "and now you will

have the greatest fight of all, for it is besieged by the Red Knight of the Red Lands, the fiercest warrior in the kingdom. I pray that you may overcome him, for no other knight but you will ever be able to set my mistress free."

"I will do what a man can do," said Beaumains; and they rode up to a great sycamore tree on which hung a horn made from an elephant's tusk. Upon this horn the knight blew such a note that the castle walls rang with the sound, and men came leaping from their tents and pavilions, and those within the castle looked over the walls and out of the windows.

Then the Red Knight of the Red Lands put on his armour hastily, and it was all blood-red, his armour, spear and shield. Two barons set his spurs upon his heels, and an earl buckled his helmet upon his head. Then he mounted his steed and rode into a little valley before the castle, where all might behold the battle.

Now the Lady Lyonesse looked out from her window, and Beaumains saw her, and thought her the fairest and gentlest lady he had ever seen. She held out both her hands



towards him in greeting, and he smiled back to her and cried: "You shall be my lady, and I will ask nothing better than to do battle in your cause."

Then the two knights charged at one another and the fight began. They fought at first on horseback, and when their spears were broken they fought with sword on foot. All day long the battle continued, and never had any man seen such a fight.

At last the Red Knight dealt Beaumains so sore a blow that he felled him to the ground. Every man thought that his end had come,

but the damsel who had ridden with him cried: "Oh! Sir Beaumains, where is your courage? The Lady Lyonesse watches and weeps. Do not fail her in the hour of need."

When Sir Beaumains heard this cry, he was filled with new strength. He leapt to his feet, and, gripping his sword, he smote such mighty blows at the Red Knight, that he brought him to the ground, where he lay senseless. Then many earls and barons and valiant knights prayed Beaumains to spare his life, and this Beaumains did.

The siege of the castle was now raised, and Sir Beaumains rode across the drawbridge and knelt at the feet of the Lady Lyonesse. Her face was filled with joy as she raised him up and placed both her hands in his.

"You are the most goodly knight that ever lived," said she, "and I place both myself and this castle in your keeping."

In the end Beaumains married the lady, and became lord of the castle and the wide lands around; but before this, he did many brave deeds in all parts of the country, and became one of the most famous of King Arthur's Knights of the Round Table.

From MALORY'S *Morte D'Arthur*.



ROBIN HOOD AND THE ABBOT

I

"There are twelve months in all the year,
As I hear many men say,
But the merriest month of all the year
Is the merry, merry month of May."

It was a bright May morning, and the young green leaves of the forest gleamed in the sunshine. The birds were singing merrily, and everything was as fresh and fair as it could be. Robin Hood stood leaning against a great oak-tree, watching, with a kindly smile, his merry men who stood or lay around him.

Each of them was clad in a suit of Lincoln

green, each had a long yew bow by his side and a quiver full of arrows slung around his shoulders. One man, who was remarkable for his huge size, left a group of his comrades with whom he had been laughing and talking, and walked up to his chief.

"Well, Little John," said Robin, "this is a merry morning."

"It is, master," replied the outlaw.

"What should we be doing on such a merry morning as this?"

"What should we be doing, master?" replied the big man. "I think we should be having dinner."

"You are always thinking of eating," said Robin with a hearty laugh. "Still your idea is good. We will have dinner, but first we must have a guest to share it with us."

"Yes, master," said Little John, "and make him pay for it, too, I will warrant."

"Why, so he shall," replied Robin. "If he is a baron, an earl, an abbot or a knight, he can afford to pay for the best. Take your bow, Little John, and find such a guest for me. William Scarlett and Much, the miller's son, shall go with you. As for myself, I will go and search alone."

The three bowmen set off in one direction, Robin Hood in another. It was not long before he reached a rough road which led through the forest, and here he hid himself amongst the green leaves by the side of the path, so that he might watch all who went by.

The first who passed was a parish priest, a good and worthy man whom Robin knew well. As he plodded along the path, the sharp whizz of an arrow startled the good man almost out of his senses.

"Who would shoot at me?" he cried. "I have no money and no goods, and have done no man any wrong." He looked round to see whence the shot had come, but not a soul was in sight. Yet there was the arrow, still quivering in a stout elm-tree, a few paces in front; and fastened to the arrow was a small canvas bag.

"Ah! that is good Robin again," said the priest joyfully, as he unfastened the bag and saw five gold coins inside it.

"Now Allen's poor widow shall have some good blankets and a basket of food, and Will o' the Dale shall have his tax paid, and thus be free from prison."

The next who passed along the road was a

poor old woman, whose rags fluttered in the breeze. She was bent almost double under a heavy load of wood which she had been gathering in the forest.

Suddenly a voice came from a thicket: "Catch, mother! Here comes something to keep out the wind," and a good cloak of Lincoln green came flying out into the road.

"Heaven thank you, Master Robin!" cried the old woman, "for I know it must be you. No one else is so good to the poor as you are."

"No need for thanks, mother," replied the voice, "I know some one who will give me enough cloth for a hundred cloaks like that —though it will not be of his own free will, I fear. And before you go, throw away that great bundle of wood you are carrying, it is much too heavy for an old woman like you."

"I must have firewood," she replied, "though this pain in my back makes it more difficult to carry every day."

"Never fear, mother," came the voice, "I know your cottage well. Sleep soundly to-night, and to-morrow morning you will find enough wood outside the door to last you for a year."

So the little old woman cast down her

load, wrapped herself in the cloak, and passed along the road pouring blessings upon good Robin's head.

II—*Robin's Guest*

Some little time passed, and then the dull clatter of horses' hoofs sounded in the distance.

"Oh!" cried Robin Hood, "here comes my guest at last."

Before long a splendid procession came into view. First rode a stout and splendidly-dressed monk upon a dapple-grey palfrey. Next came ten pack-horses with their drivers, and after them rode a body of forty steel-clad men-at-arms.

Robin quickly leapt from his hiding-place and stood in the middle of the road, leaning upon his long bow.

"Out of my way, rascal!" shouted the monk insolently. "Who are you that dares to bar the road?"

"A simple bowman, sir," replied Robin quietly. "And who are you that rides attended like a king?"

"Impudent knave," said the other, "I am



the Abbot of St. Mary's, and dearly shall you pay for this conduct. Ho! men, string this rascal up to yonder tree."

"Oh! pardon, pardon, Sir Abbot!" cried the outlaw, pretending to tremble. "Do not hang me. Surely a churchman like yourself would not take away a fellow-creature's life."

"I'll give you no pardon," replied the Abbot. "String him up, men, without further delay."

Bold Robin did not wait to be attacked. He sprang away into the greenwood, and

blew a long, loud note on his horn. It was answered by a faint note in the distance, and before many minutes had passed, a hundred bowmen, in their Lincoln green, came running through the trees.

Then the arrows flew thick and fast, and the Abbot's men-at-arms and drivers, afraid of an enemy that they could not even see, turned their horses' heads and galloped off at full speed, leaving their master and his pack-horses to look after themselves.

"Whom have we here, master?" asked Little John, as the men crowded round the terrified monk.

"This is the good Abbot of St. Mary's," replied Robin, "who just now was about to hang me up to yonder tree."

"Cut his head off, master," cried Little John fiercely, "and throw him into the ditch."

"Oh! pardon, pardon," cried the Abbot, who now knew well into whose hands he had fallen. "If I had known that it was you, Robin Hood, I would have gone some other way."

"I'll give you no pardon," said Robin, using, in mockery, the words which the

monk had used to him, "but I will not treat you as badly as you would have treated me. This day you shall be my guest in the greenwood; you shall know for once an outlaw's hospitality."

So the whole party set off gaily enough for the Trysting-Tree, under which a goodly feast was being prepared. There were great cauldrons of delicious soup, forest salads, and red-deer roasted on the wood embers. The Abbot's face lit up with joy, for he was a glutton by nature. He ate to his heart's content, and the only thing that marred his dinner was the thought of what was to follow it.

At length the meal came to an end, and the monk smacked his fat lips in evident enjoyment.

"I trust that the fare has been to your taste," said Robin Hood.

"A better meal has never passed my lips," replied the Abbot.

"I am right glad of that," said the outlaw drily; "for the better the meal the more it will cost you."

"Little money can I pay for my entertainment," said the monk. "You have my

pack-horses and my goods, but I carry with me only twenty pieces of gold."

"A small sum for a long journey," cried Robin. "Little John, lift down that leather bag which I see hanging from the good Abbot's saddle."

Little John did as he was bid, and found that the bag was filled with gold coins. So he spread his green cloak on the ground, and began to count out the gold upon it. Piece by piece he counted it out, until there lay in piles no less a sum than six hundred pounds.

"Ho! ho! ho!" laughed Robin Hood. "This can be no money of yours, Sir Abbot, for you had but twenty pounds. It must be mine. Well, well, who would have thought a simple bowman could be so rich? I must see that this money is put to a good purpose. It shall be shared amongst the poor—just as you would have used it, had it been yours!"

But the only reply that came from the Abbot was a groan. He could not bear to think of his good money being spent upon the poor.

"Give him the twenty pounds that are his," said Robin to Little John; "then set him on his horse and let him go."


T H Robinson

For the whole of a day and night the fight lasted, and in the end the monsters lay dead on the dungeon floor.

It was not long before the gaolers discovered that Bevis had slain the dragons, and so much did they admire his strength and courage, that they let down wheat-cakes and water every day for his sustenance.

Thus three years passed away, during which Bevis kept himself strong and healthy by all manner of exercises. At last his two gaolers were sent away to another part of the country, and the two men who took their places knew nothing at all of Bevis and his brave deeds.

One of them said to the other: "Comrade, let us go down into the dungeon and slay this prisoner, then we shall be free from the task of guarding his cell."

So they took a rope and fastened one end to the side of the cell. Then one of them climbed down, armed with a sword, with which he aimed a blow at the head of Bevis. The latter, however, avoided the stroke, and smote the man such a buffet on the side of the head, that he fell to the ground dead.

The other gaoler, wondering what had hap-



"THE COUNTERFEITING OF A CENTIME UNDER GREEK LAW IS PUNISHED NO LESS A SUM THAN SIX HUNDRED POUNDS."

So they took the Abbot and put him on his dapple-grey; but his face they turned towards the horse's tail, and with a hearty smack, sent the patient animal trotting off through the forest.

"Farewell, Abbot," cried Robin; "and when next you visit us, remember that it is always best to speak the truth."

So, amidst a storm of laughter from the merry bowmen, the fat Abbot went bob-bob-bobbing through the woodland glades.

From an Old Ballad.



following day. But when he went to do so, he found that it had been stripped like the first, and nothing left but the bare straw.

"This is evidently the work of magic," he said. "Whoever has wasted the land of Dyfed, and carried off Guri and his mother, is now at work on my corn."

However, the third field of wheat was also ripe, and over this he made up his mind to keep watch. In the evening he took his two silver spears, headed with steel, and lay in hiding to watch what happened.

Until midnight he did not hear a sound. Then there arose the loudest tumult in the world, and, peeping out from his hiding-place, he saw the largest army of mice that can be imagined. The ground seemed alive with them.

He stood gazing in silent amazement, and saw the mice run into the field of corn. Each of the little creatures climbed up one of the stalks, and cut off the ear of wheat at the end of it, and there was not a single stalk in the field which had not a mouse upon it. Having bitten off the ears, the mice scampered away as fast as they could, carrying their booty with them.



"SON," SAID SHE, "WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?"



ROBIN HOOD

On the fairest time of June,
You may go, with sun or moon,
Or the seven stars to light you
Or the polar ray to right you;
But you never may behold
Little John, or Robin bold,
Never one, of all the clan,
Thrumming on an empty can
Some old hunting ditty, while
He doth his green way beguile,
To fair hostess, Merriment,
Down beside the pasture Trent;
For he left the merry tale
Messenger for spicy ale.

Gone, the merry morris din;
Gone, the song of Gamelyn;
Gone, the tough-beltèd outlaw
Idling in the "grenë shawe"

[1] Greenwood.

All are gone away and past!
And if Robin should be cast
Sudden from his turfèd grave,
And if Marian should have
Once again her forest days,
She would weep, and he would craze.
He would swear, for all his oaks,
Fallen beneath the dockyard strokes,
Have rotted on the briny seas;
She would weep that her wild bees
Sang not to her. Strange! that honey
Can't be got without hard money!

So it is. Yet let us sing:
"Honour to the old bowstring:
Honour to the bugle-horn!
Honour to the woods unshorn!
Honour to the Lincoln green!
Honour to the archer keen!
Honour to tight Little John,
And the horse he rode upon!
Honour to bold Robin Hood,
Sleeping in the underwood!
Honour to Maid Marian,
And to all the Sherwood clan!"
Though their days have hurried by,
Let us two a burden try.

JOHN KEATS.



CHRISTMAS EVE IN ENGLAND

After our long journey in the stage-coach, Frank Bracebridge and I were very glad to reach the old mansion which was his home. The squire, Frank's father, came out to receive us, accompanied by his two other sons, and as the evening was far advanced, he would not permit us to change our travelling dresses, but took us at once to the company, which was assembled in a large, old-fashioned hall.

While affectionate greetings were going on between young Bracebridge and his relatives,

I had time to look round the apartment. The grate had been removed from the wide fireplace, to make way for a fire of wood, in the midst of which an enormous log was glowing and blazing.

This I understood was the Yule log, which the squire was particular in having brought in and lighted on Christmas Eve, according to ancient custom.

It was really delightful to see the old squire seated in his arm-chair, by the fireplace of his ancestors, and looking around him, beaming warmth and gladness to every heart. Even the dog that lay at his feet would look fondly up in his master's face, wag his tail against the floor, and stretch himself again to sleep, confident of kindness and protection.

Supper was served shortly after our arrival, and the table was spread with goodly fare; but the squire made his supper of "frumenty," a dish made of wheat cakes boiled in milk, with rich spices, being a standing dish in old times for Christmas Eve.

I was happy to find that my old friend, mince pie, was included in the feast; and knowing that I need not be ashamed of my liking for him, I greeted him with all the

warmth with which we usually greet an old acquaintance.

No sooner was supper removed, and spiced wines peculiar to the season introduced, than the squire was called upon for a good old Christmas song. He thought for a moment, and then, with a sparkle in his eye, and a voice that was by no means bad, he rolled out a quaint old ditty.

"Now Christmas is come,
Let us beat up the drum,
And call all our neighbours together,
And when they appear,
Let us make them such cheer,
As will keep out the wind and the weather."

The supper had disposed every one to gaiety, and an old harper was summoned from the servants' hall, where he had been strumming all the evening.

He was a resident of the village, I was told, but was more often to be found in the squire's kitchen than his own home, the old gentleman being fond of the sound of the "harp in hall."

At the sound of his music, a dance was begun, which, like most dances after supper, was a merry one. Some of the older folks

joined in it, and the squire himself took hands with a partner, with whom he stated he had danced at every Christmas for nearly half a century.

The party then broke up for the night, with the kind-hearted custom of shaking hands. As I passed through the hall, on the way to my bed-room, the dying embers of the Yule log still sent forth a dusky glow, and I was half tempted to steal from my room at midnight, to see whether the fairies were not at their revels about the hearth.

WASHINGTON IRVING.





THOMAS OF HERSILDOUNE

A Scottish Legend

In the reign of Alexander III of Scotland lived that renowned person, Thomas of Hersildoune, called the Rhymer because of his beautiful verses. Besides being a poet, he was also a prophet, and, as is well known, a powerful magician.

Many legends concerning this personage are current along the Scottish Border, the inhabitants of which still believe that Thomas sometimes makes his appearance. Such a tale is the following—

It chanced, many years since, that there lived on the Borders a jolly horse-dealer, who was remarkable for a reckless and fearless temper, which made him much admired, and a little dreaded, amongst his neighbours.

One moonlight night he was riding over Bowden Moor, leading two horses which he had not been able to dispose of. Suddenly he met a man clad in singularly antique clothes, who, to his great surprise, asked the price of his horses.

Canobie Dick, for so we shall call our Border dealer, mentioned a price, which was at once paid by the stranger. All that puzzled Dick was, that the gold which he received was in ancient coins, such as had not been seen in the country for centuries.

It was gold, however, and as Dick had asked for his horses about six times what they were worth, he was not inclined to grumble about the coinage. Indeed, he was only too glad, at the command of so good a customer, to bring horses to the same spot more than once. Yet the purchaser insisted that he should always come by night and alone.

I do not know whether it was from mere

curiosity, or whether some hope of gain was mixed with it, but after Dick had sold several horses in this way, he suggested that he should go with the stranger to his house, and share a meal with him.

"You may see my dwelling if you will," said the man, "but if you lose courage at what you see there, you will rue it all your life."

Dick, however, laughed the warning to scorn, and, having alighted to secure his horse, he followed the stranger up a narrow footpath, which led them up the hills to the queer eminence stuck betwixt the most southern and the centre peaks, and called, from its resemblance to such an animal in its form, the Lucken Hare.

At the foot of this eminence, which is almost as famous for witch meetings as the neighbouring windmill of Kippilaw, Dick was somewhat startled to observe that his conductor entered the hillside by a passage or cavern, of which he himself, though well acquainted with the spot, had never seen nor heard.

"You may still return," said his guide, looking back upon him—but Dick scorned

to show the white feather, and on they went.

They entered a very long range of stables; in every stall stood a coal-black horse; by every horse lay a knight in coal-black armour, with a drawn sword in his hand; but all were as silent, hoof and limb, as if they had been cut out of marble. A great number of torches lent a gloomy lustre to the huge hall. At the upper end, however, they at length arrived, where a sword and horn lay on an antique table.

"He that shall sound that horn and draw that sword," said the stranger, who now announced that he was the famous Thomas of Hersildoune, "shall, if his heart fail him not, be king over all broad Britain. So speaks the tongue that cannot lie. But all depends on courage, and much on your taking the sword or the horn first."

Dick was much disposed to take the sword, but his bold spirit was subdued by the terrors of the hall, and he thought that if he unsheathed the sword first, he might give offence to the powers of the Mountain.

He took the bugle with a trembling hand, and blew a feeble note, but loud enough to



"It bore the unfortunate horse-dealer right out of the mouth of the cavern."—*See* p. 84.

produce a terrible answer. Thunder rolled in stunning peals through the immense hall; horses and men started to life; the steeds snorted, stamped, ground their bits, and tossed on high their heads—the warriors sprang to their feet, clashed their armour, and brandished their swords.

Dick's terror was extreme at seeing the whole army, which had been so lately silent as the grave, in uproar, and about to rush on him. He dropped the horn, and made a feeble attempt to seize the enchanted sword; but at the same moment, a voice pronounced aloud the mysterious words—

"Woe to the coward, that ever he was born,
Who did not draw the sword before he blew the horn!"

At the same time, a whirlwind howled through the long hall. It bore the unfortunate horse-dealer right out of the mouth of the cavern, and hurled him over a steep bank of loose stones. Here the shepherds found him the next morning, and he just had sufficient breath to tell his fearful tale, when he fell back and expired.

SIR WALTER SCOTT.



THE LAST OF THE PECHS

LONG ago there lived a race of people in Scotland called the Pechs.[1] They were small men with red hair and long arms, and they were possessed of knowledge beyond the ordinary.

One of their arts was the manufacture of sugar from heather, and this art was much sought after by all the other people in the country. But the Pechs would never let out the secret. They handed it down from father to son, with strict injunctions from one to another never to let any one know about it.

Now these Pechs had great wars, in the

[1] Probably the Picts.

course of which many of them perished; and in time a mere handful of them was left, and it looked as if the race would soon die out entirely. Still they held fast to their secret of the heather-sugar, determined that their enemies should never wring it from them.

At last a great battle was fought between the Pechs and the Scots, and so great was the slaughter that only two of the former survived, a father and his son. The King of the Scots then sent for the pair, in order that he might terrify them into telling him the secret.

He looked at them fiercely and said: "I warn you plainly to disclose your secret peaceably, for if you refuse I will have you tortured until you confess. Therefore think well upon the matter and yield in time."

"Well," replied the old man to the king, "I can see that it is of no use to resist. Yet there is one condition to which you must agree before you learn the secret."

"And what is that?" said the king.

"You must first promise me to fulfil it, so long as it involves nothing that is against your own interests," replied the man.

The king thought for a moment and then said; "Yes, I can safely promise that."

"Then," said the Pech, "you must know that I wish for my son's death, though I do not care to take his life myself."

The king was extremely astonished at such a request; but he had given his promise, and so he caused the lad to be put to death.

When the old man saw that his son was dead, he started up with a look of triumph on his face and cried: "Now do with me according to your will. My son is weak, and you might have compelled him to yield to you our secret, but I am strong and me you can never force."

The king was now more astonished than before, and was vexed that he had been thus outwitted by the old man. However, he saw that no good could come of killing the Pech, and that the greatest punishment he could now impose upon him was to keep him alive.

So he was taken away a prisoner, and he lived for many years, until he became a very old man, blind and confined to his bed.

Most people had forgotten that such a person was still alive, but one night, when some young men in the house were boasting of their marvellous feats of strength, he leaned

over the side of his bed and said that he would like to feel one of their wrists.

"Let me see," said he, "if it may be compared with the arms of men who lived in former days."

In jest, they held out to him a thick bar of iron, crying, "Take hold, and see if any of the men of old had a wrist such as this."

The Pech said nothing, but taking the iron bar between his fingers, he snapped it in two as if it had been a pipe-stem. "In truth," said he, "it is not without firmness, but it is nothing to the wrist-bones of my days."

Such was the last of the Pechs.

Adapted from CHAMBERS' *Popular Traditions of Scotland.*





A STAG HUNT IN THE HIGHLANDS

At length the period fixed for the grand hunting arrived, and Waverley and the Chieftain departed for the place of rendezvous, which was a day's journey to the northward.

They found on the spot several powerful Chiefs, to all of whom Waverley was formally introduced, and by all cordially received. Their vassals and clansmen, a part of whose duty it was to attend on these parties,

appeared in such numbers as amounted to a small army.

These active assistants spread through the country far and near, forming a circle, which, gradually closing, drove the deer in herds together towards the glen where the Chiefs and principal sportsmen lay in wait for them.

In the meanwhile, these distinguished persons rested among the flowery heather, wrapped up in their plaids; a mode of passing a summer's night which Waverley found by no means unpleasant.

For many hours after sunrise, the mountain ridges and passes retained their ordinary appearance of silence and solitude. At length, signals of the approach of the game were seen and heard. Distant shouts resounded from valley to valley, as the various parties of Highlanders, climbing rocks, struggling through copses, wading brooks, and traversing thickets, approached more and more near to each other, and forced the astonished deer, with the other wild animals that fled before them, into a narrower circle.

Every now and then the report of muskets was heard, repeated by a thousand echoes.

The baying of dogs was soon added to the chorus, which grew ever louder and more loud.

At length, the advanced parties of the deer began to show themselves, and as the stragglers came bounding down the pass by twos and threes at a time, the Chiefs showed their skill by bringing down the fattest deer with their guns.

But now the main body of the deer appeared at the head of the glen, pressed into so narrow a space, that their antlers appeared, from a distance, like a leafless grove.

Their number was very great, and from a desperate stand which they made, with the tallest stags arranged in front in a sort of battle array, the more experienced sportsmen began to expect danger.

The work of destruction, however, now commenced on all sides. Dogs and hunters were at work, and muskets resounded from every quarter. The deer, driven to desperation, made at length a fearful charge right upon the spot where the chief sportsmen had taken their stand.

The word was given in Gaelic to fling themselves upon their faces; but Waverley, on

whose English ears the signal was lost, had almost fallen a victim to his ignorance of the ancient language. Fergus, observing his danger, sprang up and pulled him with violence to the ground, just as the whole herd broke down upon them.

The tide being quite irresistible, and wounds from a stag's horns very dangerous, the activity of the Chieftain may be considered, on this occasion, as having saved his guest's life.

He detained him with a firm grasp until the whole herd of deer had fairly run over them. Waverley then attempted to rise, but found that he had suffered several bad bruises; and, upon a fuller examination, discovered that he had sprained his ankle badly.

This checked the mirth of the meeting, although the Highlanders, used to such accidents, and prepared for them, had suffered no harm themselves. A wigwam was erected almost in an instant, where Waverley was laid on a couch of heather, and attended by one of the clansmen who had some rough skill in surgery.

SIR WALTER SCOTT.



LORD ULLIN'S DAUGHTER

A CHIEFTAIN to the Highlands bound,
Cries, "Boatman, do not tarry!
And I'll give thee a silver pound,
To row us o'er the ferry."

"Now who be ye, would cross Lochgyle,
This dark and stormy water?"
"O, I'm the chief of Ulva's isle,
And this Lord Ullin's daughter.

"And fast before her father's men
Three days we've fled together;
For should he find us in the glen,
My blood would stain the heather.

"His horsemen hard behind us ride;
Should they our steps discover,
Then who will cheer my bonny bride
When they have slain her lover?"

Outspoke the hardy Highland wight,
"I'll go, my chief—I'm ready!
It is not for your silver bright,
But for your winsome lady.

"And, by my word, the bonny bird
In danger shall not tarry;
So though the waves are raging white,
I'll row you o'er the ferry."

By this the storm grew loud apace,
The water-wraith was shrieking;
And in the scowl of heaven each face
Grew dark as they were speaking.

But still as wilder blew the wind,
And as the night grew drearer,
Adown the glen rode armèd men;
Their trampling sounded nearer.

"O haste thee, haste!" the lady cries,
"Though tempests round us gather;
I'll meet the raging of the skies,
But not an angry father."

The boat has left a stormy land,
A stormy sea before her;
When, oh! too strong for human hand,
The tempest gathered o'er her.

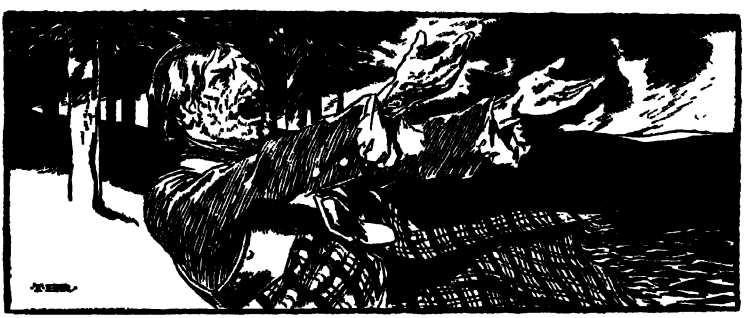
And still they rowed amidst the roar
Of waters fast prevailing;
Lord Ullin reached that fatal shore—
His wrath was changed to wailing.

For sore dismayed, through storm and shade,
His child he did discover;
One lovely hand she stretched for aid,
And one was round her lover.

"Come back! come back!" he cried in grief,
"Across this stormy water;
And I'll forgive your Highland chief,
My daughter! O my daughter!"

'Twas vain. The loud waves lashed the shore,
Return or aid preventing;
The waters wild went o'er his child,
And he was left lamenting.

THOMAS CAMPBELL.





FINN AND THE BEAUTIFUL FAWN

A Tale of an Irish Hero

I

In the days when the Romans ruled in Britain, there lived in Ireland a famous hero named Finn. He was the chief of the Fians of Erin, and they were a noble band indeed.

These Fians were the fighting men of ancient Ireland, whose duty it was to guard the coasts from invasion. Every one of them was a trained warrior, and very skilful in the use of weapons. Each candidate for admission to the band had to undergo several severe tests; the easiest was to ward off, with

a stick and a shield, the spears which were flung at him by seven strong men.

When the Fians were not out watching for invaders, they spent most of their time fishing and hunting. In the summer they lived in tents in the open air; but in the winter they were entertained at the expense of the kings and chiefs.

Well, Finn was the captain of this band, so you may know what a great hero he must have been. One day, when he was a young man, he was out hunting with some of his companions. Each of them had two hounds held by a leash, and Finn had with him his two favourite dogs, Bran and Brod.

Suddenly a beautiful fawn started up from the ground, and sped off like the wind. Then there was a blowing of horns indeed, and the Fians, loosing their hounds, set off in pursuit. But this was no ordinary fawn, for it ran with such swiftness that before long all the men and dogs were left behind, except Finn and his two hounds.

On they ran, until there was no one in sight; then the animal ceased her flight as suddenly as she had begun it, and lay down on the fresh, green grass. Finn was amazed

at this, but what surprised him still more was to see his great hounds frisk joyfully round her, licking her face and neck.

"This is indeed a marvel," said Finn, as he gazed at the strange sight. "It is a shame to kill so beautiful and gentle a creature."

When he set off for home, the fawn followed him, playing with the hounds. Together they walked over the wild moors, until they came in sight of the camp of the Fians, with its fluttering banners and numerous tents. Passing through a wide gateway, they walked along a broad, green path until they reached a very large pavilion.

There were many men inside, listening to the song of a minstrel, who played the harp as he sang. Upon the approach of Finn, all the men rose to greet him. Some hurried away to fetch freshly-cooked meats, for they knew that their chief would be hungry after the chase. As for the fawn, she lay down at the tent door with the dogs, and many came to see the strange sight.

Late that night, when the singing and the feasting were at an end, Finn sat alone in his great tent. Suddenly there appeared before him a beautiful lady, though how she came

there he did not know. She was richly dressed, and had so noble an air that it was plain she was a princess at the very least.

"Who are you, fair lady?" said Finn in surprise, "and what do you seek of me?"

"Great captain of the Fians," replied the lady, "I come to you for protection. I am a princess of Carmain, but three years ago I was changed into a fawn by a wicked enchanter, because I refused to marry him. It was I whom your dogs chased to-day, though in truth I had no fear, for I knew they would do me no harm."

"How did you come hither?" asked Finn.

The lady replied: "For three years I led the life of a wild deer in a distant part of Erin. Then a slave of the enchanter took pity on me because of my sufferings. He revealed to me, that if I were once within the tents of the Fians of Erin, the enchanter's power over me would be at an end. At once I flew away like the wind, and I have known little rest until this day."

Finn was moved at the lady's sad story and said: "Princess, you have not sought me out in vain. Have no fear for yourself. So long as you dwell within my tents, I will protect you, I and all my men."

So the princess dwelt in the camp of the Fians for many months, and during this time Finn grew so fond of her, that in the end he married her. They were as happy together as the day is long, and so deep was Finn's love for the rescued princess that he went forth neither to the fight nor to the chase.

At length they had a little son as fair as the day, and then their happiness seemed to them to be complete. But when the boy was but a week old, a messenger came in hot haste to Finn's tent, crying that a strong force of Norse Vikings had landed on the coast and had begun to ravage the land.

So Finn buckled on his armour, set his great winged helmet upon his head, and led the seven battalions of his Fians against the foe. Each battalion marched under its own standard of war, and the hills resounded with the merry song of the war-horns.

Yet Finn's princess felt far from merry as she watched the brightly-dressed host setting out for battle. She hugged her baby tightly to her breast, and wept, for a great dread fell upon her lest some harm should happen to her lord.

II

For seven days the Fians fought the fierce Vikings. The Norsemen fell before their swords like corn before a sickle, and in the end, those that were left of them were glad to flee to their long-ships and hasten from Erin's shores.

On the eighth day, the Fians rested and feasted, for they were spent with battle and famished with hunger. Then on the morrow they marched back to their camp with banners flying and trumpets sounding.

As they came in sight of the tents, Finn's heart leapt with joy. A tall, handsome young man, named Diarmid, was by his side, a man whom Finn loved dearly. To him the chief said: "O Diarmid, I am glad to see these banners and white canvas roofs again, for I long to look upon my beloved wife and child."

As they came nearer to the tents, the guards rushed out to meet them, but sadness was on every face. The princess was not with them, and Finn's heart sank and a great fear came upon him.

"Where is my princess?" he cried, "the beautiful flower of Carmain?"



The chief of the guards held low his head and said: "Blame us not, O captain. While the Northmen were falling before your mighty sword, your image and the images of Bran and Brod appeared before the camp. We thought we heard you wind your horn, and make the sweet music we all know so well."

Finn turned fiercely upon the speaker and cried: "Quick, man! Out with your story! What of the princess?"

"Captain," replied the man, "she heard the notes, came from her tent with the babe,

and fled down the pass to meet you. She would listen to no word from us, but rushed straight into the arms of your image. Then a dreadful thing came to pass."

As he spoke the man bowed his head upon his hands and wept with grief.

"Continue!" said Finn fiercely. So the Fian went on with his story.

"No sooner had she reached the image, than it touched her with a hazel wand, and lo! where she had stood, there ran a gentle fawn upon the hillside. Then the image picked up the child, and the two hounds chased the fawn far from the camp."

"Cowards!" cried Finn fiercely, "you shall pay with your lives for this. What were you doing when all this happened?"

The man replied: "By my head, O Finn, we were not idle. These things came to pass in less time than it would take for a man to count twenty, and by then we were racing over the hill with sword and javelin. But there was neither fawn, nor dog, nor child, nor enchanter to be seen. No sound was to be heard save the sighing of the wind and the rustling of the grasses."

As the man came to an end, Finn's face

turned as if to stone. He smote the mail which covered his heart with his clenched hands, and without a word strode away to his great tent, into which no one dared to follow him. Nor did he show himself again to his people until seven days and seven nights had passed away.

After this he was a changed man. He went to war and to the chase as before, but no smile was ever seen upon his lips, and no cheery word came from his tongue. Yet he was kindly to all men save the foe, and no woman ever came to him in vain for protection.

Twelve years passed by, during which Finn searched every corner of the land for his beloved princess. When he went out to the chase, he never took with him any hounds but his favourites, Bran and Brod, lest he should endanger her life if he were fortunate enough to find her.

At the end of this time, when he and some of his Fians were hunting on a certain mountain-side in Leinster, they heard a great outcry among the dogs which had gone on before them into a narrow pass.

They hastened into the pass, and there

they found the two great hounds of Finn biting and snarling fiercely at their comrades. Behind Bran and Brod stood a handsome boy clad in skins, and it was evident that the two dogs were protecting him from the teeth of the others.

The boy stood with his back to a rock, with no sign of fear upon his noble face. He did not seem to know of his danger, for he did nothing but gaze in wonder at the stately warriors, as they closed around the dogs and beat them back with the shafts of their javelins.

The moment that the fight was stopped, Bran and Brod leapt up to the boy with every sign of affection, licking his hands and whining and fawning around his feet. It seemed, in their joy, that they had forgotten who was their master.

Finn and his companions went up to the boy and spoke to him, but found that he could not understand, neither had he the power of speech. So they took him to their tents, where he ate and drank with them, and soon began to lose his wild nature.

Now, strange to say, the boy's features were very like those of the lost princess; so

Finn loved him and kept him always by his side, hoping that the lad was his own son. The boy returned his affection, and the two could never bear to be separated, even for an hour.

At length the boy learnt to speak, and then he related his story, and a strange tale it was.

The first thing that he remembered was his home, which was a cave on the edge of a wide and fertile plain. Here he was tended by a fawn, which he loved tenderly, and which brought fruits and other food to him in his sheltered cavern. There was no escape from the plain on which they lived, for it was enclosed by high, steep cliffs, over which no one could pass.

From time to time, a dark man with cruel features came to them, and spoke in harsh tones to the fawn, which always shrank from him in fear.

At last a day came when this man, who could have been no other than the enchanter, seemed to grow more and more angry, until he struck the fawn with a hazel wand, and she fell dead upon the plain.

The boy then related how he also received

a stroke with the wand, which sent him into a deep sleep. When he awoke he found himself on the hillside, where, some days after, he was attacked by the dogs.

"This is indeed my son," said Finn when the boy had finished. "I know now that I shall never see his mother again, but he shall always be with me, to be my comfort in my old age."

And the Fians who were standing around looked at each other and wondered, that a son should come back to his father in such strange fashion.

The boy received the name of Ossian, and when he grew older he became the sweet singer of the Fians of Erin. His songs are sung to this day.

From the Ossianic Legends.





KATHLEEN

THERE was a lord of Galloway,
 A mighty lord was he;
And he did wed a second wife,
 A maid of low degree.

But he was old and she was young,
 And so, in evil spite,
She baked the black bread for his kin,
 And fed her own with white.

She whipped the maids and starved the men,
 And drove away the poor.
"Ah, woe is me!" the old lord said;
 "I rue my bargain sore!"

This lord he had a daughter fair,
 Beloved of old and young,
And nightly round the flaming fires
 Of her the gleeman sung.

"Oh, come to me, my daughter dear,
Come sit upon my knee;
For looking in your face, Kathleen,
Your mother's own I see."

Oh, then spake up the angry dame,
"Get up, get up," quoth she;
"I'll sell ye over Ireland,
I'll sell ye o'er the sea."

She sent her down to Limerick town,
And to a seaman sold
This daughter of an Irish lord
For ten good pounds in gold.

The lord he smote upon his breast,
And tore his beard so grey;
But he was old, and she was young,
And so she had her way.

Sure, that same night the Banshee howled
To fright the evil dame,
And fairy folks, who loved Kathleen,
With funeral torches came.

She watched them glancing through the trees,
And glimmering down the hill;
They crept before the dead-vault door,
And there they all stood still!

"Get up, old man! the wake-lights shine!"
"Ye wicked witch," quoth he,
"So I'm rid of your tongue, I little care
If they shine for you or me.

"Oh, whoso brings my daughter back,
My gold and land shall have!"
Oh, then spake up his handsome page:
"No gold nor land I crave!

"But give to me your daughter dear,
Give sweet Kathleen to me;
Be she on sea or be she on land,
I'll bring her back to thee."

"My daughter is a lady born,
And you of low degree;
But she shall be your bride the day
You bring her back to me."

He sailèd east, he sailèd west,
And far and long sailed he,
Until he came to Boston town,
Across the great salt sea.

"Oh, have ye seen the young Kathleen,
The flower of Ireland?
Ye'll know her by her eyes so blue,
And by her snow-white hand!"

Out spoke an ancient man: "I know
The maiden whom ye mean
I bought her of a Limerick man,
And she is called Kathleen.

"No skill has she in household work,
Her hands are soft and white,
Yet well by loving looks and ways
She does her cost requite."

So up they walked through Boston town,
And met a maiden fair,
A little basket on her arm
So snowy-white and bare.

"Come hither, child, and say, hast thou
This young man ever seen?"
They wept within each other's arms,
The page and young Kathleen.

"Oh, give to me this darling child
And take my purse of gold."
"Nay, not by me," her master said,
"Shall sweet Kathleen be sold.

"We loved her in the place of one
The Lord hath early ta'en;
But since her heart's in Ireland,
We give her back again!"

Sure, now they dwell in Ireland;
As you go up Claremore,
Ye'll see their castle looking down
The pleasant Galway shore.

And the old lord's wife is dead and gone,
And a happy man is he,
For he sits beside his own Kathleen,
With her darling on his knee.

JOHN G. WHITTIER.





THE ENCHANTED LAND

A WELSH TALE

I—*The Magic Mist*

In the south of Wales there was, in olden times, a region called Dyfed.[1] It was a goodly land, with green pastures, wooded hills and sparkling streams. There was never a land more pleasant to live in, with better hunting-grounds or with greater abundance of honey and fish.

The prince of Dyfed was Guri of the Golden Hair, a man of splendid stature, who gained his name from the yellow locks which fell upon his shoulders. He lived in his palace at Lanberth with his wife, Elan the Lily Maid, and his mother Riannon the Fair.

[1] The modern county of Pembrokeshire.

With him dwelt a famous chieftain, named Manaddun, his bosom friend, who had stood by his side in many a hard-fought battle. Such was the friendship between the two, that they could not bear to be parted from each other. Their days they spent in hunting, and their evenings in feasting and listening to the stirring songs of the harper.

Those were merry times in Dyfed. With horse and hound the two young lords rode gaily throughout the land, and the hills rang with the music of their horns. Husbandmen labouring in the fields would cease their work when they heard the cries of the hunters and the baying of the dogs. They would say: "Hark! those are the hounds of Guri. The prince is abroad to-day. He has let loose his hounds."

Those were merry times in Dyfed, but there was much sadness in store. It came about in this wise.

Towards the beginning of summer, a great feast was held at the palace of Lanberth, at which were gathered all the lords and ladies of Guri's court. Just as they had come to an end of the meal, thunder began to rumble, and suddenly a dreadful peal shook

the castle from top to bottom, so that all the guests started up in fear.

Then a mist fell, so thick that not one of those that sat at meat could see the others. The mist cleared away as quickly as it had fallen, but lo! when it was gone, the great hall was empty, save for Guri and Manaddun, and the prince's wife and mother.

"In the name of heaven," cried Guri, "where are my courtiers and my men-at-arms? Let us go and see." So they sought through the whole of the castle, from the cellars to the turret, but they found no one; there was nought but desolation.

Then they went forth into the country, and looked towards the places where they were accustomed to see flocks and herds. But all were gone, and the land, once the fairest in the world, was now an uninhabited desert. One touch of some unknown magic had changed the face of Dyfed from a rich realm to a wilderness.

So the four began to travel through the land and all the possessions that they had. They visited the houses and dwellings, but found nothing save the wild beasts. Then they began to wonder what was the cause of so much desolation.

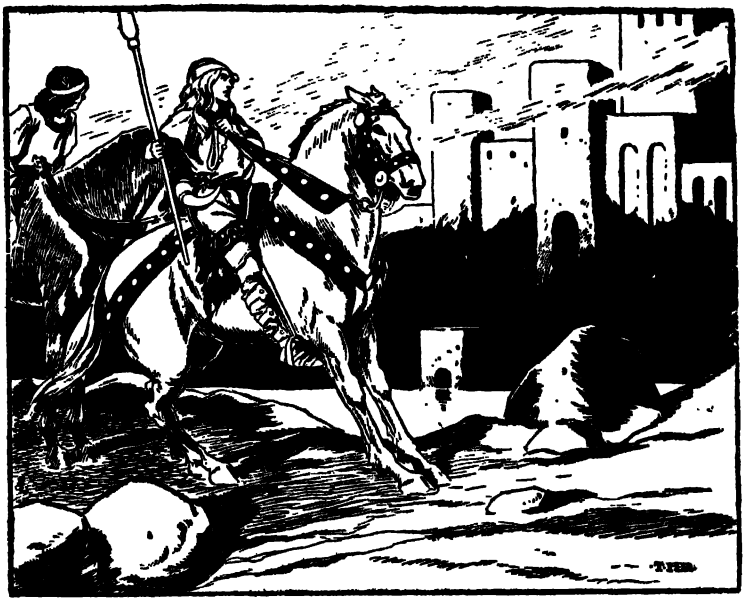
At length Riannon, Guri's mother, said: "An enchantment has been put upon the land of Dyfed, and this has surely been done by a certain bishop named Lud, the son of Kilcoed. When my husband was alive, Lud swore to be the ruin of our family, in revenge for the death of his brother, whom my husband slew in battle."

The others replied: "This is surely so." But they did not know how they might overcome the magic arts of the bishop Lud.

It was not long now before their provisions came to an end, and they were forced to live upon the prey they killed in hunting, and upon the honey of wild bees. Thus two years passed by pleasantly enough, although the four were lonely in the big, empty palace.

One morning, Guri and Manaddun gathered their hounds together as usual, and went forth to hunt. Some of the hounds ran on before them, and came to a small bush which was near at hand. Here they stopped and bayed, until from out of the bush there ran a wild boar of a pure white colour.

The two chieftains immediately set off in chase, and pursued the animal until they came to a vast and lofty castle, all newly



built, in a place where both the hunters were certain that no castle had been before. Into the castle ran the boar, and the hounds ran swiftly after him.

Guri and his friend did not venture to follow them. They stood upon a mound a short distance away, and waited for their hounds to return. But they waited in vain; there was no sign or sound of the dogs.

At length Guri said: "I will go into the castle to get tidings of the hounds."

"Truly," replied Manaddun, "you would

be unwise to go into this strange castle, which neither of us has seen before. To my mind, the castle has been placed here by the same hand that has enchanted this land."

"That may be true," replied Guri, "but I cannot give up thus my hounds." And in spite of his friend's advice, he left him and went into the castle.

II—*The Magic Castle*

When he had passed through the gate, he found neither the boar nor his hounds, nor any trace of man or beast. There was nothing in the castle but a great courtyard with a small fountain in the middle of it. On the edge of the fountain there was a beautiful golden bowl, fastened to a marble slab by chains.

Guri was so greatly pleased with the beauty of the golden bowl, that he put out his hands and took hold of it. But a great surprise was in store for him. When he seized the bowl, he found that he could not withdraw his hands from it, nor could he move his feet from the marble slab on which the bowl was placed. There he stuck, unable to cry out or to utter a single word.

Meanwhile Manaddun remained outside on the mound and waited for the prince until the evening, when he returned to the palace. As he entered, he met Riannon, who looked at him in surprise and said: "How is it that you come alone? Where are your companion and your hounds?"

"Behold," he replied, "the adventure which has befallen me." And he related to her all that had happened.

When he had come to an end of his tale, Riannon said scornfully: "An evil friend you have been, and a good friend you have lost."

With these words she left him and went straight to the magic castle. The gate was open, and she entered fearlessly, and in the court she found Guri glued to the bowl.

"Son," said she, "what are you doing here?"

Guri made no reply, so she seized the bowl with the intention of freeing his hands, but she became fixed herself and was unable to utter a single word.

Then it became dark as night; thunder pealed in the air, and a thick mist fell. When it had melted away, lo! the castle had vanished, together with its two prisoners.

Manaddun and Elan, Guri's wife, were now left all alone in the land of Dyfed, and they sorrowed so that they did not care whether they lived or died. They had lost their dogs, and could no more hunt in the old manner. So the chieftain accustomed himself to fish, and to stalk the deer in their covert.

Then he began to cultivate the fields, and in the soil he sowed wheat. Although he was more used to the arts of war and the chase than to the labours of a husbandman, yet the corn sprang up in abundance, and better wheat was never seen.

Little by little, the shoots grew and ripened, until it was time for the harvest. Then Manaddun went to look at one of his fields, and saw that the golden grain was quite ripe.

"I will reap this to-morrow," he said. But when he went to his work in the morning, he found nothing in the field but the bare straw. Every one of the ears of wheat had been cut from the stalk and carried away. And at this the chieftain was greatly amazed.

So he went to the next field, which was also ripe, and determined to cut it down on the

Manaddun was now filled with wrath, and rushed upon the mice to destroy them; but so fast did they run that he could no more come up with them than if they had been birds of the air.

There was one of them, however, which was less nimble than the others, though even this one could run with wonderful speed. Manaddun ran after it with all his might, and succeeded in catching the mouse before it could escape. He tied his little prisoner in his glove, and took it back to the palace, and showed it to Elan.

"To-morrow I will hang it," he said, "and I would have hanged them all, if I could have caught them."

But Elan replied: "It is not fit for a man of your dignity to hang such a wretched little creature as this. Do no harm to it, but let it go."

"Nay, lady," he answered, "there is some secret magic in this matter, therefore I think it best to destroy the mouse."

"Do as you will, then," said Elan.

III—*The Enchantment Removed*

The next morning Manaddun took the mouse to a hillock not far from the palace. There he set up two forks, placed a cross-beam upon them, and was just about to hang the mouse upon it, when he heard the tramp of horses. This sound caused him much surprise, for no human being, save himself and his friends, had been seen in Dyfed for years.

His surprise was still greater when he saw riding towards him a bishop upon a white mule, followed by seven pack-horses and many attendants. So amazed was he that he stopped to gaze at them.

"What are you doing there?" asked the bishop.

"I am hanging a thief," replied Manaddun. "This mouse has robbed me."

"Has it indeed?" replied the bishop. "Yet, since I happen to have come just as it is about to die, I will ransom it. I will give you seven pounds for it, rather than see a man of your rank destroy so weak a creature as this."

"No," replied the other, "I will not let it go."

"If you will not set it free for that," said the bishop, "I will give you twenty-four pounds in ready money to release it."

Now when Manaddun heard the priest offer so large a sum for so worthless an animal, he thought it very strange; and the idea suddenly came to him, that this might be the very bishop whom Riannon had suspected of laying the land of Dyfed under enchantment.

So he answered cunningly: "I would not set it free for twice that sum."

The bishop seemed much distressed at this, and said: "If you will set it loose, I will give you all my horses and the loads of baggage that are upon them."

"I will not," replied Manaddun.

"If you will not do so for this," said the bishop, "then name your own price."

"That will I do," said the chieftain in triumph; "and my price is the freedom of Guri and his mother Riannon."

The bishop looked somewhat downcast at this, but he replied: "Very well, they shall be set free."

"Still, I will not let the mouse go," said Manaddun.

"What more do you ask?" exclaimed the bishop.

"You must promise to remove the enchantment from the land of Dyfed," replied the other.

"Yes, you shall have this also," said the bishop impatiently, "therefore set the mouse free without further delay."

"Not so fast! Not so fast!" cried Manaddun. "I must know who the mouse is, and why it came to me."

"It is my own wife," replied the bishop with a groan, "and it came to spoil your fields of wheat. I am Lud, the son of Kilcoed, and it was I who cast the enchantment upon the land of Dyfed, to revenge myself for the death of my brother, slain many years ago by the father of Guri of the Golden Hair. It is my own household that I transformed into mice in order that they might destroy your corn. But since my wife has been caught, I will restore to you Guri and Riannon, and will take the enchantment from Dyfed, if you will let her go."

"I will not set her free," cried Manaddun



"until you have promised that you will put no more enchantment upon Dyfed, and that you will take no revenge for this hereafter."

"You have done wisely in asking for this," replied the bishop, "for otherwise much trouble would have come upon you for what you have done this day. Now I swear it, so set my wife at liberty."

"Let me first see Guri and his mother," said Manaddun. But even as he spoke the words, he saw them coming towards him, and he ran to meet them with warm greetings.

"Ah! chieftain," said the bishop in a weary

voice, "are you not now satisfied? Set my wife free, for you have received all that you have asked."

"I will, gladly," cried Manaddun. So he released the mouse, and Lud touched her with a magic wand, and she was changed back into a young woman, the fairest ever seen.

With that, the bishop and his retinue suddenly vanished, and when Manaddun and his friends looked around them, they saw the fair land of Dyfed tilled and cultivated once again, and full of lowing herds and goodly dwellings. just as it had been in former days.

They hastened back to the palace of Lanberth with the greatest joy, and there they found Elan the Lily Maid, together with all the lords and ladies of the court.

The delight of Guri and his wife at meeting once again after their long separation was too great to be described. A splendid feast was prepared without delay, and such merriment was never known in the land before. Dyfed was freed for ever from its enchantment, nor did harm ever again come to any of those that dwelt therein.

From LADY GUEST'S translation of *The Mabinogion.*



BETH GELERT

(*The Grave of the Greyhound*)

THE spearmen heard the bugle sound,
And cheerily smiled the morn;
And many a brach,[1] and many a hound,
Obeyed Llewelyn's horn.

And still he blew a louder blast,
And gave a lustier cheer:
"Come, Gelert, come, wert never last
Llewelyn's horn to hear.

"Oh, where doth faithful Gelert roam,
The flower of all his race;
So true, so brave—a lamb at home,
A lion in the chase?"

[1] A dog for the chase.

'Twas only at Llewelyn's board
The faithful Gelert fed;
He watched, he served, he cheered his lord,
And sentinelled his bed.

In sooth he was a peerless hound,
The gift of royal John.
But now no Gelert could be found,
And all the chase rode on.

And now, as o'er the rocks and dells
The gallant chidings rise,
All Snowdon's craggy chaos yells
The many mingled cries.

That day Llewelyn little loved
The chase of hart and hare;
And scant and small the booty proved.
For Gelert was not there.

Unpleased, Llewelyn homeward hied.
When, near the portal seat,
His truant Gelert he espied,
Bounding his lord to greet.

But when he gained his castle-door,
Aghast the chieftain stood;
The hound all o'er was smeared with gore;
His lips, his fangs, ran blood.

Llewelyn gazed with fierce surprise:
Unused such looks to meet,
His favourite checked his joyful guise,
And crouched, and licked his feet.

Onward, in haste, Llewelyn passed,
And on went Gelert too;
And still where'er his eyes he cast,
Fresh blood-drops shocked his view.

O'erturned his infant's bed he found,
With blood-stained cover rent;
And all around, the walls and ground
With recent blood besprent![1]

He called his child—no voice replied—
He searched with terror wild;
Blood, blood he found on every side,
But nowhere found his child.

"Fierce hound! my child's by thee devoured."
The frantic father cried;
And to the hilt his vengeful sword
He plunged in Gelert's side.

His suppliant looks, as prone he fell,
No pity could impart;
But still his Gelert's dying yell
Passed heavy o'er his heart.

[1] Sprinkled.

Aroused by Gelert's dying yell,
Some slumberer wakened nigh;
What words the parent's joy could tell
To hear his infant's cry!

Concealed beneath a tumbled heap
His hurried search had missed.
All glowing from his rosy sleep
The cherub boy he kissed.

Nor scathe had he, nor harm, nor dread.
But, the same couch beneath,
Lay a gaunt wolf, all torn and dead,
Tremendous still in death.

Ah, what was then Llewelyn's pain?
For now the truth was clear;
His gallant hound the wolf had slain
To save Llewelyn's heir.

Vain, vain was all Llewelyn's woe;
"Best of thy kind, adieu!
The frantic blow which laid thee low
This heart shall ever rue."

And now a gallant tomb they raise,
With costly sculpture decked;
And marbles, storied with his praise,
Poor Gelert's bones protect.

There, never could the spearman pass,
 Or forester unmoved;
There, oft the tear-besprinkled grass
 Llewelyn's sorrow proved.

And there he hung his horn and spear,
 And there, as evening fell,
In fancy's ear he oft would hear
 Poor Gelert's dying yell.

And, till great Snowdon's rocks grow old,
 And cease the storm to brave,
The consecrated spot shall hold
 The name of "Gelert's Grave."

WILLIAM ROBERT SPENCER.





RAMA AND SITA

A Tale of Ancient India

In the land of Kosala there once stood the city of Darath, the most beautiful in all the world. Wide streets crossed this city in every direction. They were lined with splendid shops and stately palaces glittering with jewels.

There was no lack of food in Darath, for it abounded in paddy and rice, and its water was as sweet as the juice of the sugar-cane. Its people were the most fortunate in the world, for all of them were peaceful, happy and wealthy.

Over this wonderful capital of a prosperous kingdom ruled King Janaka, a man of great virtue and great wisdom. He had a daughter

named Sita, who was so beautiful that suitors came from all parts of India to seek her hand in marriage. But the king would give her to no one who was not strong enough to bend a mighty bow, which had once belonged to the Hindu god of war.

Such a huge weapon as this bow had never been seen on earth before. It had to be carried on a four-wheeled cart, and four oxen were required to pull the load. It was little wonder that many suitors would not even try to bend it after they had seen it; while those that did try could not move it an inch.

Each day, the king would sit with his guards and nobles in the hall of his palace. All around were pillars, wonderfully carved and shining with gems. At one end was the king's throne, made of ivory and gold; while in the middle was a block of black marble on which rested the great bow.

One day, while the suitors were attempting their difficult task, the king saw amongst them a very tall, handsome young man, clad in the dress of a simple forester.

"Who are you?" asked the monarch. "Do you dare to try where so many princes have failed?"

"My name is Rama," said the man modestly, "but who I am, I may not say. I dwell in the forests and live by hunting."

The courtiers began to laugh when they heard this, and one of them cried: "Begone, forester; return to your woods, or we will have you whipped out of the city."

Rama said nothing, but, advancing towards the man, he seized him in a mighty grip and dashed him to the floor, where he lay senseless. The guards rushed to lay hands on the daring stranger, but the king said: "Let him be. If he wishes to try my bow, he shall do so, and he shall die if he fails."

So Rama walked to the block of marble upon which the bow lay, and picked up the great weapon as easily as if it had been a feather. Inch by inch he bent it, while every one looked on in silence and amazement. Inch by inch he bent it until it would bend no more.

Still he drew the string, until the immense weapon snapped in two with such a crash, that all present fell to the ground stunned by the noise.

The lovely princess was now to be the bride of Rama, and arrangements were at

once made for a splendid wedding. But King Janaka was very angry that a poor forester had won his beautiful daughter. No sooner was the wedding ceremony over, than he ordered Sita and her husband to be driven out of the city.

"She has married a forester," he cried "and in the forest she shall live and die."

So the couple had their glittering wedding garments taken from them, and, clad in rough clothes, were conveyed from the city in one of the royal chariots. Crowds of people followed them, weeping bitterly at their fate, for they loved their princess, and feared that she would die in the woods. Yet Sita went willingly enough, for already her tall, strong husband was very dear to her.

The chariot took them to the edge of a great jungle, where they dismissed the charioteer with a tender message from Sita to the old king. Then the two plunged into the forest on foot, and soon left behind them every sign of the existence of man.

Rama took his wife by the hand, and led her on through the densely-packed trees. It was gloomy in the jungle, and Sita grew frightened.

"Husband!" she said, trembling, "where are you leading me? I do not like this dark forest. If you were not by my side, I should die of fright."

"Have no fear, little one," replied Rama. "I am taking you to our woodland home, and the path is well known to me."

Presently they came to a small stream, and, following its course for some miles, they reached a place where the trees no longer shut out the light of day. They were scattered here and there, and the green leaves did no more than afford a pleasant shade.

Then Sita saw a pretty cottage by the side of the river. It was made of wood, and had a thatch of leaves, and over it spread the boughs of a gigantic banyan tree.

"Oh, what a lovely house!" cried the princess, clapping her hands with delight. "Is this really ours?"

"It is, indeed," replied Rama; "but although it is pretty enough, you will find it very different from your gorgeous palace."

For a few days Sita did miss the luxury to which she had been accustomed. But she soon grew to love the quiet beauty of their



HEAR MY PRINCE THE WOODLAND SNOW ME?"

home, the cool shade, the perfumed flowers, and the sparkling river.

There was food in plenty all around them. Fruits and roots were abundant, and the forest was full of wild creatures. All day long Rama hunted in the woods, while his wife stayed at home, attending to the house and cooking the food.

Three months thus passed pleasantly away, and they were the happiest months that Rama and Sita had ever known in their lives. Then there came a day when the princess sat lonely by the riverside, for her husband had been away all day and was late in coming home.

As she sat watching the water flow silently to the sea, she heard a great noise in the forest, a smashing and a crashing of the trunks of trees. She started up in terror, but was too frightened to run away. Soon the noise grew louder and louder, and at last a great party of men appeared, cutting a broad road through the jungle.

When they reached the cottage they stopped, and silently disappeared among the trees. Then Sita heard the rumble of wheels and the clatter of horses' hoofs, and the head

of a great army began to issue from the jungle. There were chariots and horsemen in thousands, mingled with a vast multitude of splendidly dressed men on foot.

At the head of the army rode a man whose garments glittered with gems and precious stones. He rode upon a magnificent white steed which seemed to dance rather than walk. A golden helmet was upon his head, and around his waist was a broad belt of gold on which was worked the story of wonderful deeds.

Sita did not dare to look at this shining figure. She held her eyes low, until she heard a well-known voice. "Sita, my princess of the woodlands, do you not know me?"

Then, looking up, Sita saw that it was her husband, and, with a glad cry of surprise, she ran to meet him and clasped his hands, saying: "Ah! husband, what has happened? and how is it that you come like a great prince?"

Rama replied: "The forester to whom you were wed has gone for ever, and in his place stands the King of Mithila. Long ago, dear wife, I heard of your fame and deter-

mined to marry you. But I wished to see if you would hold me as dear for myself alone as for my wealth and rank. So I came in disguise to your father's court, and gained the best wife that was ever won by forester or king."

A golden litter then came forward, borne by four horses. Sita was assisted into it, and the whole army set off for the king's capital. There Rama and his queen were received with the greatest rejoicings, and were conducted with all pomp and splendour to the palace.

They lived to the end of their days in peace and happiness, blessed with many children and beloved by their subjects.

Adapted from the *Ramayana*.





THE FATHER OF THE IROQUOIS

I—*The Burnt Coat*

On the north side of the Great Lake,[1] and half-way between the rising sun and the evening star, there is a land of deep snow and biting frost. The winds whistle over the snowy slopes, and the storms howl in the bare branches of the pine-trees.

In the season of cold, the waters are all locked up, and the land is bound with icy bands. Then suddenly, for a short space of time, the sun shines fiercely, and the snow melts, and rushes down to the rivers and the lake.

[1] Lake Superior.

But before long the cold sets in again, and the land becomes once more a desolate wilderness, lifeless and without movement, and a vast silence reigns over all.

In this wild and lonely region lived the first people in the world, a girl and her little brother. The animals were the masters in those days, and the two children lived in constant dread of being destroyed by the fierce creatures.

The boy was very small in stature. He never grew, but always remained the size of a very little child. He was too weak to undertake the task of finding food, so the girl had to take this duty upon herself.

Every day she went out searching diligently under the snow for roots, for they lived on vegetable food, and had never learnt to eat meat. She also hunted amongst the pines for sticks, which she carried back to their lodge to keep the fire ablaze.

She was usually afraid to leave her little brother at home, lest harm should come to him. But he walked so slowly, and grew tired so quickly, that he proved a great hindrance to her. So one day she determined to leave him behind.

Giving him a little bow and some tiny arrows, she said to him: "To-day I am going off without you; but because you will want something to do while I am away, I have given you this bow and these arrows. Remain in the lodge until you see the snow-birds come down to search for food. Then shoot your arrows at them, and if you shoot well, you will bring one of them down."

The little fellow did as he was bid. He shot manfully at the snow-birds, but met with no success. He was in despair when his sister returned home in the evening; but she spoke cheerful words to him, and encouraged him to try again on the following day.

This he did, and to his great delight he brought down one of the birds. It was only a little one, but he was very proud of it, and he buried it under the snow until his sister returned home.

When he heard her footsteps, he rushed out of the lodge, crying triumphantly: "Behold, sister, the beautiful bird which I have shot! Skin it for me, and when I have killed more, I will have a coat made of the feathers."

"This is splendid!" replied the girl. "Soon, little brother, you will become a great hunter. I will certainly make a coat for you, when you have succeeded in bringing down some more birds."

So the boy persisted in his efforts, and within a few days he had shot twenty birds, from the feathers of which his sister made for him a beautiful coat.

One evening, when the snows were beginning to melt under the heat of the sun, the two children were sitting on a fallen tree-trunk near their lodge, when the boy suddenly exclaimed: "What a lonely world this is, sister! Are there no others like us? It would be so pleasant to have some companions with whom we could talk and play."

"We are the only people on the earth," said the girl sadly. "There are no others like us; but over there, through the pine-woods, live many fierce animals, who would quickly destroy us if they could. Beware, little brother, of the great moose, the cruel bear, the shaggy buffalo, and the slinking wolf; but beware, above all, of the sharp-toothed beaver, who is the king of all beasts."

At this time, the beaver was not a small and harmless animal as it is now. It was the largest and the strongest of them all. When it stood up, it looked like a mountain.

The girl's words made her brother very curious. Moreover, having shot so many birds, he was filled with pride, and thought himself a very great hunter indeed. He determined to venture through the pine-woods, and slay some of the wild creatures of which his sister had spoken.

So, in the grey light of the morning, he put on his feather coat, took his bow and arrows, and set off through the trees. He walked a long distance without meeting anything, and as the sun mounted up into the sky he grew tired and sleepy.

At last he lay down on a grassy hillock and fell fast asleep. As he slumbered, the sun began to shine down upon him with greater force, until in the end it singed all the feathers of his bird-skin coat, and completely spoilt its appearance.

The smell of the burning plumage awakened the lad, and when he perceived that his beautiful garment was ruined, he flew into a rage and shook his tiny fist at the sun.

"Do not think," he cried, "that, because you are so high in the heavens, you are safe in playing your mischievous tricks. Sooner or later I will punish you for the harm you have done me."

On his return home, he complained bitterly to his sister of the injury which he had suffered from the sun. He brooded over the matter for days, until he had formed a plan by which he might punish the sun for its behaviour towards him.

II—*Snaring the Sun*

Having decided what he should do, the boy said to his sister: "Go and make for me a snare, and see that it is strong."

"For what do you require a snare?" asked the girl. "Are you going to catch a squirrel or a dormouse?"

"No," replied the boy, "I am going to catch the sun, to punish him for spoiling my feather coat."

So the girl went out and sought for something strong, with which she could make a noose, but she could find nothing. After a long search, she returned to the lodge, and,



"Before the sun had mounted far, however, it came to a sudden stop."—*See* p. 150.

pulling out some of her long black hair, offered it to her brother, fully expecting him to tell her that it would be useless.

Much to her surprise, however, the boy took the hair and began to draw it rapidly through his teeth. Strange to say, as fast as he pulled the hair, it changed into a stout cord of very great strength, which he placed carefully in a corner of the lodge.

He then ate a hearty meal, and early in the morning he set off with his cord in order to catch the sun as it rose. When he had reached a spot where he thought the sun would first make its appearance, he made a noose of the cord, and fastened the snare securely around a great rock.

Soon the snowy slopes of the distant hills were tinged with rosy hues, the first sign that the sun was about to begin its daily march across the heavens. Rose changed to orange and orange to gold, and at last a fiery rim began to rise above the earth.

Before the sun had mounted far, however, it came to a sudden stop, for it was held fast in the snare and could move no farther.

Then there was a great turmoil and confusion upon the earth. The animals rushed

here and there, stricken with terror and amazement. What had happened? Why was there no light? The beaver, the king of the beasts, hastily summoned a great council, and a long debate took place as to what action should be taken.

The speakers were numerous and the speeches lengthy, but at last it was decided that a commission should be appointed to go and sever the cord, which held fast the giver of light and warmth.

This was more easily said than done, for no one cared to accept such a difficult and dangerous task. The wolf suddenly remembered that his wife was very ill, and slunk off into the forest. The moose discovered that he had a thorn in his foot, and disappeared to find some one to remove it. The otter could think of no better excuse for retiring than that he "thought it was going to snow."

One by one the animals departed, until the beaver was left all by himself.

"What cowards!" he cried bitterly. "It is evident that as no one else will go, I shall have to release the sun myself."

He set out upon his mission, and when he

arrived at the place where the sun lay bound, he began to grind at the cord with his large, sharp teeth. But the sun scorched his fur, which began to curl up and burn. Worse still, the intense heat attacked his body, causing it to shrink in size.

The beaver was much frightened, but he kept to his task and succeeded in cutting through the cord, whereupon the sun leapt up to its accustomed place in the sky. But the poor beaver was reduced to his present size, and he has never since regained his former stature.

As for the boy who was the cause of all the trouble, he was so elated by his success that he began to grow from that day. He, who had been so puny, became a mighty man with a powerful body and strong limbs. Never has there lived so tall a man since his day.

He fought with the animals and became the master of them all. He learnt to eat their flesh, and to rejoice in the taste of cooked meat, and he taught his sister to do likewise. He was a great hunter and a great warrior, and from him the whole of the Iroquois nation has sprung.

From a Legend of the Iroquois Indians.



KWASIND THE STRONG MAN

IDLE in his youth was Kwasind,
Very listless, dull and dreamy,
Never played with other children,
Never fished and never hunted,
Not like other children was he;
But they saw that much he fasted.

"Lazy Kwasind!" said his father.
"In the hunt you never help me;
Every bow you touch is broken,
Snapped asunder every arrow.
Yet come with me to the forest,
You shall bring the hunting homeward."

Down a narrow pass they wandered,
Where a brooklet led them onward,
Where the trail of deer and bison

Marked the soft mud on the margin,
Till they found all further passage
Shut against them, barred securely
By the trunks of trees uprooted,
Lying lengthwise, lying crosswise,
And forbidding further passage.

"We must go back," said the old man,
"O'er these logs we cannot clamber;
Not a woodchuck could get through them,
Not a squirrel clamber o'er them!"
And straightway his pipe he lighted,
And sat down to smoke and ponder.
But before his pipe was finished,
Lo! the path was cleared before him;
All the trunks had Kwasind lifted,
To the right hand, to the left hand,
Shot the pine-trees swift as arrows,
Hurled the cedars light as lances.

"Lazy Kwasind!" said the young men,
As they sported in the meadow,
"Why stand idly looking at us,
Leaning on the rock behind you?
Come and wrestle with the others,
Let us pitch the quoit together!"

Lazy Kwasind made no answer,
To their challenge made no answer,
Only rose, and, slowly turning,
Seized the huge rock in his fingers,
Tore it from its deep foundation,

Poised it in the air a moment,
Pitched it sheer into the river,
Sheer into the swift Pauwating,
Where it still is seen in Summer.

Once as down that foaming river,
Down the rapids of Pauwating,
Kwasind sailed with his companions,
In the stream he saw a beaver,
Saw Ahmeek, the King of Beavers,
Struggling with the rushing currents,
Rising, sinking in the water.

Without speaking, without pausing,
Kwasind leaped into the river,
Plunged beneath the bubbling surface,
Through the whirlpools chased the beaver,
Followed him among the islands,
Stayed so long beneath the water,
That his terrified companions
Cried: "Alas! good-bye to Kwasind!
We shall never more see Kwasind!"
But he reappeared triumphant,
And upon his shining shoulders
Brought the beaver, dead and dripping,
Brought the King of all the Beavers.

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW.



FUR TRADERS IN CANADA

AMONGST the first of the British to settle in the wilds of Canada, were those fearless men who went into the desolate regions of the far north to trade with the natives for furs.

As early as the days of King Charles the Second, a great trading company, called the Hudson Bay Fur Company, was formed, which obtained from the King a charter entrusting them with the government of the lands around Hudson Bay.

Over this territory, the Company erected their "factories," which were nothing but lonely wooden forts, inhabited by perhaps a dozen men, and surrounded, for purposes of defence, by a strong stockade of logs.

The traders obtained the valuable furs, which were their source of wealth, from Indian and Eskimo hunters; and a constant cause of trouble, in the early days, was the enmity which existed between the two races.

At length, the rulers of the company determined to bring about a treaty of peace between the Muskeegon Indians of James Bay, and the Eskimos of Hudson Straits.

The Muskeegons were by no means a warlike race. On the contrary, they were naturally timid, and only plucked up courage to make war on their northern neighbours because the poor people had no firearms, while they themselves were supplied with guns by the fur-traders.

The Eskimos were much more powerful men than the Indians, and would have had little respect for their enemies, if they had met on equal terms, or, indeed, on any terms at all; but the evil was that they never met.

The Indians always took them by surprise, and from behind the rocks and bushes poured a hail of bullets into their camps; while their helpless foes could only reply with their almost harmless arrows and spears.

Thus the war was in fact an annual raid of

murderers. The Muskeegons returned to their wigwams in triumph, with scalps hanging at their belts; while the Eskimos plunged farther into their ice-bound wilderness, and told their comrades of the sudden attack, and of the wives and children who had been killed or led away captive.

At such times, the wild inhabitants of the frozen regions vowed vengeance on the Indians, and blamed in their hearts the white men who supplied them with the deadly gun. But the blame was not deserved, for in their councils the fur-traders had discussed the wrongs of the Eskimos, and had made plans to improve their condition.

Those in charge of the districts around Hudson Bay and Labrador used every argument to induce the Indians to cease their attacks on their peaceful neighbours, but without much effect.

At length the governor of East Main—a territory lying on the eastern shores of James Bay—made use of an argument which proved quite successful, at least for one season.

His fort was visited by a band of Muskeegons, who brought a quantity of valuable

furs, for which they asked guns and ammunition, making no secret of their intention to proceed on an expedition against their enemies the Eskimos.

On hearing of this, the governor went out to them, and, in an indignant voice, told them that they should not have an ounce of supplies for such a purpose.

The astonished Indians replied: "But we will pay you for what we ask. We are not beggars!" It had never entered into their heads that white traders would refuse good furs merely in order to prevent the death of a few Eskimos.

"See!" cried the angry governor, snatching up the nearest bale of furs. "See! that is all I care for you or your payment." And, hurling the pack at its owner's head. he felled him to the ground.

"No," he continued, shaking his fist at them, "I will not give you so much powder or shot as would blow off the tail of a rabbit, if you were to bring me all the skins in Labrador!"

The result of this action was that the Indians retired in very low spirits. But in the camp that night they plotted revenge.

In the darkness of the night, they killed all the cattle around the fort, and, before daybreak, were over the hills and far away in the direction of their hunting-grounds, loaded with fresh beef sufficient to supply themselves and their families for the winter.

It was a heavy price to pay; but the poor Eskimos remained that year untroubled by their cruel foes, while the Indians received a lesson which they did not forget for a long time.

R. M. BALLANTYNE.





THE RUINED CITIES OF RHODESIA

LYING to the north of the Transvaal Colony in Africa is a vast territory known as Rhodesia. This name it received out of compliment to the late Cecil Rhodes, the South African statesman, who was mainly instrumental in securing the land for Great Britain.

When the first settlers went to Rhodesia, they found it in the hands of Zulu tribes, who lived chiefly by rearing herds of cattle, and stealing those of their neighbours. One of these tribes, the Mashona, proved friendly, and made good servants for the white men. The Matabele, however, a much more war-like race, caused great trouble until their

king, Lobengula, a cruel and ferocious savage, was conquered by the British.

When the early settlers began to explore the country, they were amazed to find in many places ancient gold mines, which must have been worked at least two thousand years ago by a civilized race. The fame of these mysterious mines soon spread, and led to a closer examination of the land.

Then numerous irrigating trencnes were discovered, similar to those in use in certain parts of Asia. These seem to show that the land was formerly inhabited by a civilized race, which came originally from some country where irrigation was largely carried on.

Finally the ruins of ancient fortresses and temples were found, half-hidden by trees and bushes, and overgrown with grass and weeds. The finest specimens were discovered near Victoria, and are called by the natives, Zimbabwe. These remains, crowning the summits of hills, consist of circular walls, neatly built of dressed stone laid without the use of mortar.

They were evidently, in ancient times, temples of worship, or strong and lofty forti-

fications, for in one of them the walls are no less than sixteen feet in thickness. Their structure shows that they must have been erected by a people possessed of skill and intelligence far beyond that ever attained by any of the negro races. .

These ruins have long been a puzzle to learned men, for all memory of the builders has passed away, and no one can give any information about them.

Learned men have gone out from England to seek for an explanation of the mystery. They have succeeded in digging up a few relics from beneath the ruins, but all that they are able to tell from them is, that the ancient inhabitants were skilled in the manufacture of weapons of war, glass, pottery and ornaments of gold.

Who worked these ancient mines, and built these great walls which still, after thousands of years, frown down upon the grassy plains? What strange, forgotten race was this, which brought civilization into the heart of Africa, when our own ancestors were painted savages? We know nothing; and the mystery remains as baffling to-day as it was when the Zimbabwe were first discovered.

Some think that this was the fabled land of Ophir, others that the Queen of Sheba once ruled in these departed towns. Others, again, that the mines are those from which King Solomon obtained the gold with which he decked his temple.

The natives have many tales to account for the appearance of the old ruins and mines, but none of them are to be trusted, however interesting they may be. The Mashona say that the builders were a race called the Amalosa, whom they subdued when they first marched from their original home far north of the Zambesi.

A few remnants of this race still exist in some districts, but they are looked upon by their conquerors as little better than slaves. They are supposed, however, to have been more intelligent than the present ruling tribes, and possessed of greater skill in many arts.

The Amalosa are not likely to have been the builders of the Zimbabwe, which were probably erected many centuries before their date. Still, you will no doubt be interested to read the Mashona legend concerning the building of the great towers, and the fate of the Amalosa nation.



THE KING OF THE AMALOSA

THE LEGEND OF THE ZIMBABWE RUINS

I—*The Coming of Dingosi*

IN the days of Chaka, King of the Amalosa nation, there came from the far north a woman of fair skin.[1] She was found, dying of hunger, by a party of young warriors, who presented her to the king as a slave. But Chaka saw that she was beautiful, and, liking her well, he married her

From what land the woman came she never told. When questioned, she would wave her hand vaguely towards the north, and say;

[1] Not necessarily a *white* skin.

"I came from over there, across the mountains," and would answer no more.

In time this woman had two sons, the elder of whom was dark in skin like the Amalosa, while the younger was as fair as herself. The two boys were as unlike in character as they were in appearance. The elder, who was named Zomba, loved rough sports and the perils of the chase. Dingosi, the younger son, liked better to remain at home, fashioning strange playthings out of clay and stone.

Now it came about that the woman loved her son Dingosi, but his elder brother was never dear to her. She grieved much that the dark-skinned Zomba should succeed Chaka as king of the Amalosa, and plotted secretly to set Dingosi in his place.

But her plots came to nothing, and, her pride being wounded, the woman took her son and fled from the king's kraal by night. Search was made for them, but they could not be found, and it was thought that they had surely died of hunger and thirst on the mountains, or in the deserts that lie beyond.

Many years went by, and King Chaka was grown to be a very old man, near his death.

So he determined to hold a great feast, at which he intended to proclaim his son Zomba his successor. And all the king's regiments were gathered together to be paraded before him on that day.

In front of the king's house there was a great open square, and the regiments marched into this square to hear the words of their ruler. They stood in silent rows, as still as statues, each man with a waving plume of black ostrich feathers upon his head, a broad-bladed spear in his right hand, and an ox-hide shield in his left. The square was completely filled with them, except for a small space before the king's house.

At length Chaka appeared, accompanied by his son. Addressing the warriors, he said: "Listen, O my people, and give heed to my words. The days are not long that I shall be with you. When I am gone, you will need a strong king to reign over you; one who can protect his people, and make them powerful among the nations. Such a one is my son. He shall rule after me as king of the Amalosa."

Just as he finished speaking, the silence in the great square was broken by the clatter of

spear against shield, and the ranks of the warriors swayed to right and to left like corn before the wind.

Then through the midst of them, there burst a tall man, whose body was clad in a coat of shining chain-armour, half concealed by a magnificent tiger-skin cloak suspended around his neck. From his head rose a plume of white ostrich feathers, and white ox-tails were tied about his knees.

In his hand he held a battle-axe, with a long handle of ivory and gold, and at his waist hung a knife with a handle of gold. And behold! his skin was fair, and not dark like that of the Amalosa.

It was Dingosi, returned from the dead. How he had come into the great square, no one knew. No man had set eyes on him, until he began to press his way through the ranks of the warriors. But there he was for all men to see.

Stepping quickly forward, he halted before the king and his son, and raised his axe in salute.

"Greeting, O king," said he, "and greeting to you, my brother Zomba!" But they gazed at him silently, struck dumb by their astonishment.



"Then through the midst of them there burst a tall man."

Dingosi laughed quietly, and went on: "Have you no welcome for me? Must the unbidden guest return by the way that he came?"

"No, my son," replied the old king slowly. "Our hearts rejoice to see you. But our amazement ties our tongues, for we have long mourned you as dead."

"Such was like to be my fate," replied Dingosi. "When my mother and I fled from this land and crossed the mountains, we went astray in the desert. But we fell in with a band of desert wanderers, who led us to a fruitful country beyond, and from there we journeyed to the land of my mother's people."

Then Chaka asked: "Are these people fair in skin like yourself?"

"They are," replied his son, "and their land is a land of wonders, for they are skilled in all arts. I dwelt amongst them till I grew to be a man, and learnt all their wisdom. Then my mother with her last breath bade me return to the land of the Amalosa, in order that I might give them the knowledge which I possess, and reign over them in the place of my father Chaka."

At these words there arose a sigh of astonishment from the assembled warriors, and Zomba sprang to his feet angrily. "Have you not heard," he said, "how the king has named me to rule in his place?"

Dingosi replied, "I have heard that he named his son to be king after him, but which son he did not say. Give place to me, I pray you, brother, for I come to give the Amalosa knowledge, riches and power beyond their dreams."

"Peace, my son," replied Chaka. "If you can do as you say, your claim is good and shall be considered. But you must give proofs."

"I can give proofs," replied Dingosi, "but they must be set before you alone, my father." So the two went into the king's house, where they remained for some time. What proofs Dingosi gave have never been told, but when the two men issued forth again, it was seen that the old king was much moved.

He walked up to the regiments, leaning heavily upon his spear, and cried aloud: "It is true, my people, what Dingosi has said, for I have seen signs which must be believed.

It is fated that he shall make the Amalosa powerful amongst the nations of the world, and none but he may rule in my place when I am gone. I have spoken." And he lifted his spear.

Instantly the warriors raised their spears in reply, and with a great shout of "Dingosi! Dingosi!" they began to march in silence from the square.

And with them went Zomba, the king's son, a look of black rage upon his face; nor was he ever seen in the land again. He departed with certain of his friends and dwelt among strangers, and from these people are descended such of the Amalosa as live at the present day.

II—*The Madness of the Amalosa*

Thus it was that Dingosi was proclaimed king, and within a month he became king indeed, for Chaka was overcome by old age, and was laid to rest with his fathers.

Then there began a time of great prosperity for the Amalosa. Dingosi taught them to dig channels in the earth, by which the water of the rivers might be carried over the land. The soil then became wonderfully

fertile, and produced corn and fruit in abundance. He also showed them how to build houses of stone, and how to set strong walls around them. Walled cities sprang up all over the land.

Next he taught them to dig from the earth the riches it contained, the black iron and the yellow gold. The Amalosa became skilled workers in metals, producing beautiful ornaments of gold, and weapons of iron inlaid with gold. Many other things did Dingosi teach his people, but this was long ago, and they have been forgotten.

Thus the Amalosa grew rich and powerful. Their enemies, knowing the strength of their cities, feared to attack them, and as there was no warfare, they multiplied exceedingly, being in number as the sands of the desert.

Yet they were not content. The more wealth they had, the more they desired. At last they sent six of the chief men of the nation to the great house which Dingosi had built for himself. And the oldest of the six said to the king: "Behold, O king, your people are rich beyond measure, but they are not happy."

"I am grieved to hear this," said Dingosi. "Tell me what they lack and I will give it to them."

The spokesmen replied: "The spears of your regiments grow rusty. Send out your soldiers to make war upon the nations that live around us; so may we seize their lands and cattle, and make them ours."

Dingosi looked at the chiefs sadly and said: "This thought is an evil one, but it shall be as you say." So he gathered together his regiments into four armies, which he sent north and south and east and west.

In due time the armies returned, singing songs of victory. No nation had been able to stand against their wisdom and valour. They brought with them many captives, and vast herds of cattle and goats.

The Amalosa were now richer than ever, but yet they were not content. There were no more lands for them to conquer, so they looked into the heavens, and cast envious eyes at the silvery moon.

"Let us fetch down the moon," they said in their folly, "and we will make of it a temple of silver."

So they sent their chief men again to the

king to make known to him their desire. When Dingosi heard it, he laughed scornfully and said: "Is there no end to the greed of this people? Must they have the heavens as well as the earth for their footstool? Let them have a care lest they go too far."

Yet the people gave him no peace, so he set them to erect upon a high hill a building which they intended to reach to the moon. The structure, which was round and of stone, grew until it reached an immense height. Finally, however, it lost balance and fell down, crushing both those who were working above, and those who were hauling up stones to them from below.

Then the king called together one-third of the nation, and set them to build upon another hill not far distant. Here they made a great effort to accomplish their purpose, but this tower, like the other, fell and destroyed the thousands who laboured upon it.

Dingosi now seemed seized with the madness of his people. He gathered together all that was left of the Amalosa nation, men, women and children, and set them to build upon a third hill, himself directing the work. This tower rose to a greater height than

either of the others. Its top reached the clouds, and looked down upon the mountains. But, like the others, it lost balance in the end, and fell upon those who worked at it, crushing them to death.

Such was the end of the Amalosa nation, and of Dingosi, their fair-skinned king. Their walled cities have long since crumbled to dust, but their ancient mines and the remains of their three great towers stand to this day, a wonder and a marvel to all men.

From a Tradition of the Mashona.





IN AN AFRICAN DESERT

AMONGST the names which come to everyone's mind when African exploration is mentioned is that of Sir Richard Burton. His discovery in 1857 of Lake Tanganyika, one of the great lakes of Central Africa, is alone sufficient to place him in the front rank of explorers.

Yet the two exploits which, from their very daring, did most to attract the attention of the world, were his journeys to two cities previously unknown to Europeans except by rumour.

In 1853, disguised as a Hindoo pilgrim, he laid bare the mysteries of Mecca, the holy city of the Mohammedans. an adventure

which is said to be the most dangerous ever undertaken by an explorer.

In the following year he travelled, in the disguise of an Arab merchant, into the heart of unknown Somaliland, and explored the unvisited city of Harar, the ancient capital of a once mighty empire.

The following incident is taken from his narrative of the return journey from Harar to the coast, in which he and his Arab companions had to traverse a hostile country and an almost trackless desert. It will give some slight idea of the terrible hardships which an explorer cheerfully endures in pursuit of his discoveries.

* * * * *

We shook off our slumbers before dawn, and as I issued from my tent, I remarked, near our resting-place, one of those heaps of rock common enough in the Somali country. At one end a huge block projects upwards in the shape of a gigantic tooth.

Our Bedouin guide declared that the summit still bears traces of building, and related the legend in connection with "Moga's Tooth." There, in times of old, dwelt a maiden, whose eyes could distinguish a

plundering party at the distance of five days' march.

The enemies of her tribe, after suffering heavy losses, hit upon the idea of attacking with their heads muffled in bundles of hay. When Moga, the maiden, informed her tribe that a prairie was on its way to attack the hill, they thought her mad; the trick succeeded, and the unhappy girl lost her life.

At seven o'clock, we started through the mist, and trotted eastwards in search of a well. The guide had deceived us. The day before, he had promised water at every half-mile, but he afterwards owned with groans that we should not drink before nightfall.

We rode on through uninteresting scenery —horrid hills, upon which withered aloes brandished their spears, plains apparently rained upon by a shower of stones, and hillocks covered with thorns, like the "wait-a-bits" of Kaffir land, created to tear men's skin or clothes.

Our toil was rendered doubly toilsome by the Eastern travellers' dread—the demon of Thirst rode like Care behind us. For twenty-four hours we did not taste water; the sun

parched our brains and the mirage mocked us at every turn.

As I jogged along with eyes closed against the fiery air, water always seemed to lie before me—water lying deep in the shady well—water bubbling from the rock in icy streams—water in clear lakes inviting me to plunge and revel in its coolness.

Now an Indian cloud was showering upon me fluid more precious than molten pearl; then an invisible hand offered me a bowl, for which I would have given years of life.

Then I opened my eyes to the heat-reeking plain, and a sky of the eternal blue so lovely to painter and poet, so blank and death-like to us. I tried to talk—it was in vain: to sing, in vain; vainly to think. Every idea was bound up in one subject, water.

As the sun sank into the west, we descended a wide valley. With unspeakable delight, we saw in the distance a patch of bright green. Our animals scented the blessing from afar: they raised their drooping ears, and started with us at a canter, till, turning a corner, we suddenly sighted some little wells.

To spring from the saddle, to race with

our mules to the crumbling sides of the pits, to throw ourselves into the muddy pools, to drink a long, slow draught, and to dash the water over our burning faces, took less time to do than to relate.

A calmer inspection showed us that we ought to be careful, for the surface of the water was alive with tadpoles and insects. Prudence, however, had little power at that time. We drank, and drank, and then drank again.

As our mules had fallen greedily upon the grass, I proposed to pass a few hours near the well. My companions, however, pleading the old fear of lions, led the way to a deserted kraal upon a neighbouring hill.

We had marched about thirty miles eastward, and had entered a safe country belonging to the Bagola, our guide's tribe.

SIR RICHARD BURTON.





A LUCKY PURCHASE

A Story of the Australian Gold-diggers

WHEN gold was first discovered in Australia, it was not a difficult matter to find the precious metal. It was often turned up within a foot of the ground, and by washing the gold out of the sand or clay in which it was embedded, men could make forty or fifty pounds a day.

The surface-gold soon gave out, however, and at the present day the metal is sought for at low levels. Deep shafts have to be sunk, and costly machinery is necessary to crush the rocks containing the gold. Mining

is now possible only to wealthy companies, and the day of the individual digger is past.

At one of the earliest of the gold-diggings were two miners named George Fielding and Thomas Robinson. Their life was hard and rough. From sunrise to sundown they laboured, and no slave ever worked as hard as they.

At night they slept in a good tent, with a little bag containing their gold between them. The bag never left their sight. It went out to their work, and in to sleep.

It is dinner time. Seated by the side of the hole which they have dug, George and Tom are snatching a mouthful of food, and enjoying a few moments' conversation.

"How much do you think we are worth, Tom?" said George.

"Hush!" replied his friend in a whisper, "don't speak so loud. Not a penny under seven hundred pounds."

George sighed and said: "It is slower work than I thought; but it is my fault, I am so unlucky."

"Unlucky!" replied his partner. "We have not been eight months at it yet."

"That may be," said George; "but one party near us cleared four thousand pounds at a haul—one thousand pounds apiece!"

Tom laughed, and replied: "And hundreds have only just been able to keep themselves. Come! you must not grumble, we are high above the average."

At that moment, they heard a voice cry out to them: "Hullo! you two lucky ones, will you buy our hole? It is breaking our hearts here."

Robinson arose and walked over to a large hole which had been dug to a great depth. It was yielding practically nothing, and this, curiously enough, determined our friend to buy it if it was cheap. He thought to himself: "What there is in the hole must be somewhere all in a lump."

He offered ten pounds for it, which was eagerly snapped at.

"Well done, Gardiner," said one of the band. "We would have taken ten shillings for it," he explained to Robinson.

Robinson paid the money, and let himself down into the hole with his spade. He drove the implement into the clay, and the bottom of it just reached the rock. He



"A crowd of miners buzzed near the hole."—*See* p. 186.

looked up and said: "I would have gone just one foot deeper before I gave in."

Then he called to his partner: "Come, George, we can know our fate in ten minutes."

They shovelled the clay away down to about one inch above the rock, and there, in the white clay, they found a little bit of gold as big as a pin's head.

"We have done it this time," cried Robinson. "Shave a little more off, not too deep, and save the clay."

This time a score of little nuggets came to view sticking in the clay. There was no need for washing; they picked them out with their knives.

The news soon spread. A crowd of miners buzzed near the hole, and looked down on the men picking out peas and beans of pure gold with their knives.

Presently a voice cried: "Shame! give the men back their hole!"

"Rubbish!" cried others, "they paid for a chance, and it turned out well; a bargain is a bargain."

Gardiner and his mates looked sorrowfully down. Robinson saw their faces, and jumped out of the hole for a moment. He took Gar-

diner aside and whispered: "Jump into our old hole like lightning! It is worth four pounds a day."

"God bless you!" said Gardiner. He ran and jumped into the hole just as another man was going to take possession. By diggers' law, no party is allowed to occupy two holes.

All that afternoon, there was a mob looking down at George and Robinson picking out peas and beans of gold, and envy's fire burned many a heart. These two were picking up at least two hundred pounds an hour.

CHARLES READE.





THE VOYAGES OF TAROA

I—*The Place of Storms*

THE Maoris were not originally natives of New Zealand. They migrated more than five centuries ago, from some of the numerous South Sea islands. Possibly the following myth is an imaginative account of the first discovery of their present home.

The great chief Taroa lived in the island of Havaiki.[1] It was a beautiful island, covered with bushes, shrubs and shady palm-trees. Wild flowers grew in bright clusters in the woods, and ripe berries sweet to taste. A

[1] A mythical island supposed to have been near Samoa.

sandy beach of dazzling whiteness lined the green shore, which was protected from the fury of the ocean by a low coral reef.

Now in the days of old a plague fell upon this island. It became shrouded in shadow, and the light of the sun was only seen dimly, as in a mist. Then the chief Taroa resolved to build a great canoe, and to set off on a voyage of discovery.

He had heard that, somewhere in the sun-setting, there lay a land of light, so large that no man might travel over it in a life-time, and so rich that no man might even guess the wealth which it contained

So he and his men went into the forest to find wood suitable for a large canoe. At last they came to a fine tree, which they felled, singing merrily as they plied their axes. The branches were quickly cut away, the bark peeled off and the trunk hollowed out into a great canoe. To this an outrigger was fitted, so that it might float upright in the sea, and the boat was dragged down to the water's edge.

On the morrow a mast and a great mat sail were set up in the canoe, which was named *Hope of Day*, and the chief Taroa,

with a numerous company, embarked upon his voyage of exploration.

He and his men sailed through the opening in the coral reef, and were soon bounding over the waves of the ocean; but presently the wind died down, and then the men used their paddles diligently.

On they went, until at length they reached a place where the shadows began to melt, and they could see clearly around them. Here, unfortunately, a great storm arose, which upset the canoe and flung all the men into the water. Now they had to swim for their lives, and it was with great difficulty that they succeeded in reaching their homes again.

Taroa was in no way discouraged by the failure of his first attempt. He sought again for a suitable tree, and in due time a new canoe was made ready, which was named *Longing for Light*. This was successfully launched, and for the second time Taroa and his band set off in search of the land in the sun-setting.

But they fared no better on this voyage than on the last. Scarcely had they reached the place where the first glimmer of day was



"They were again forced to save their lives by swimming."

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to be seen, than the foaming waves overturned their canoe, and they were again forced to save their lives by swimming.

Taroa now began to think that he was fated never to reach the land which he so much desired to find. Still, he did not give up heart, and set off all by himself into the woods to search for a tree from which to make a third canoe. "This," said he, "must be the largest and strongest of the three."

So he set his axe upon his shoulder and walked to a distant valley, where he knew some particularly fine trees were to be found.

Just as he was passing a mountain stream, he heard the sounds of a desperate conflict, and, looking round, saw a beautiful white heron engaged in combat with a spotted serpent.

The serpent had set its coils around the lovely bird and was slowly crushing it to death. When it perceived the chief, it cried to him: "Save me, Taroa! Put an end to this fight, or I shall surely suffer a cruel death."

But the crafty serpent said: "Nay, Taroa, go your way. I mean no harm to the bird; this is not a death-fight, but only a trial of strength."

Taroa, deceived by the serpent's words, was leaving the creatures to finish their battle, when the heron cried out in reproachful tones: "Ah! Taroa, I am the king of the birds, and, without my aid, you will never succeed in making a canoe strong enough to reach the land of light."

The chief was much surprised at the bird's knowledge of his plans, and, wondering how it could aid him in his attempt, he turned back and cut its foe to pieces with his axe. The heron, released from the cruel coils of the serpent, gave a cry of gratitude, and, flapping its wings joyfully, rose into the air and disappeared.

Then Taroa proceeded upon his way, and before long he found a magnificent tree, which he cut down with his axe. The labour, however, fatigued him, for the tree was large, and the axe of one man works but slowly. So he left the tree lying where it was, and made his way back to his home.

II—*The Bird-built Canoe*

Meanwhile, the white heron had not flown far away. It followed the chief, and looked

on from a distance as he felled the trees. As soon as he had departed, the grateful heron started off to collect together all the birds of Havaiki to hollow out the great canoe.

They did not like being disturbed, for since the island had been wrapped in shadow, the birds had remained sleeping in their nests. Yet they obeyed the heron's command, and all night long they pecked away with their bills, and before the faint light of gloomy day had reached the unhappy island once again, they had completed the most beautiful canoe ever seen upon the earth. Then the heron bade them convey the boat to the beach.

It was no easy task, but the birds clustered round the canoe in hundreds and thousands, and, stretching out their wings, they bore the boat upon them up into the air. So thickly were they gathered around the vessel, that no part of it could be seen for their feathers.

As they winged their way they sang a song, and this was the song they sang—

"Birds of Havaiki, birds of the night-land,
Bear we along Taroa's canoe.
Over the foam-waves into the light-land
Safely shall sail this bird-built canoe."

On reaching the beach they swooped gently

to the ground, and, placing the boat safely upon the soft, white sand, flew back once more to the security of their nests.

Soon afterwards Taroa came out of his dwelling, and perceived the splendid canoe lying on the shore. At the sight, his face shone with pleasure, for never had he seen so fine a boat, and he cried aloud: "White heron, I thank you! This must be your work, and it is a gift worthy of the king of birds."

The canoe, which was called *Built by Birds*, was quickly provided with a strong mast and a great sail, and much food and water were stowed in it in preparation for a long voyage. When everything was ready, the chief and fifty of his men set off on a third attempt to discover the new land.

In time they came once more to the place of storms, where the light of day first cheered their hearts. There they saw the foam-crested billows rushing down upon their frail vessel, and many of them made ready to swim for their lives once again.

But the canoe sat the waves like a sea-bird, and danced merrily upon the tops of the wildest breakers. Calmly they held on their

way, until they had left behind them the region of tempests, and found themselves floating gently along under the warm rays of the kindly sun.

Then the men made merry, and sang songs of joy, for the full light of day, of which they had been so long deprived, gladdened all their hearts. Yet their dangers were not yet over. On the third day after leaving the place of storms, they perceived a sudden commotion in the water around them, and long, writhing arms, shaped like serpents, issued forth and folded themselves around the canoe. It was a giant octopus, which threatened to crush the canoe and all within it.

The men cried out in fear, but Taroa bade them be of good heart. Seizing his great spear, he hurled it straight at the head of the octopus, and the heavy weapon pierced the monster through and through. The terrible arms relaxed their hold, and thrashed the waters of the ocean to foam; but the octopus could do no further harm, and soon it floated dead upon the surface.

They proceeded once again on their way, sailing when the wind was fair, and using the long paddles when it dropped. But one



more great peril awaited them. One day, an enormous whale bore down upon the boat. Its huge mouth was wide open, and it evidently intended to swallow both canoe and men.

The chief, however, was again equal to the occasion. Without a moment's hesitation, he seized two spears and thrust them inside the mouth of the foe, so that it was impossible for it to close its jaws. The whale, maddened by the pain, dashed up and down, now diving to the depths of the sea, now racing along

the surface. But it could not free itself from the spears, and at length it darted off at a rapid pace, and was soon lost to sight in the distance.

Taroa and his men now pursued their journey in safety, sailing always towards the setting of the sun. Day after day those fearless voyagers sailed or paddled along without seeing any land. At length a day came, when the chief perceived far away on the horizon a long, dark shape, stretching as far as the eye could see.

"Behold!" he cried, rising to his feet, "here before us is the land which we are seeking, the beautiful land of light!"

The men bent to their paddles, and before long the great canoe leapt on to a sandy beach. The explorers found the land a fair one indeed. There were great forests of trees, taller than any man had seen before. Around the trees were beautiful ferns of great size, and bushes laden with sweet fruits.

Inland were high mountains, with rugged precipices, wooded glens, and rushing torrents. Food and water were in abundance, and the sun shone pleasantly, day after day.

Then Taroa said to his men: "This is a

good land, and we will dwell here, we and all our people. Go, some of you, hasten back to Havaiki, the land of darkness, and fetch hither all who remain there."

This was done, and, after several voyages, the whole of the people of Havaiki were brought to the land of light in the direction of the sun-setting. There they dwelt pleasantly enough, refreshing themselves with fruits and fish, and decking their bodies with garlands of fresh flowers. So bright and so beautiful was their new home that they never longed for the land of their birth again.

From a Maori Myth.

